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Certain Writers and Thinkers

HANNAH MORE



HANNAH MORE, AT THE AGE OF FORTY

FROM OPIE'S PAINTING

HANNAH MORE

BY

MARION HARLAND

AUTHOR OF "SOME COLONIAL HOMESTEADS AND THEIR
STORIES," "WHERE GHOSTS WALK," ETC.

ILLUSTRATED

G. P. PUTNAM'S SONS
NEW YORK AND LONDON
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DEDICATION AND PREFACE

TO MRS. JOHN CASKIE MILLER

MY DEAR SISTER :

It is needless to remind you of the strait and tall boundaries set about "Sunday Reading" in the childhood—now so far away!—which we lived together.

You must recollect—I can never forget—what an oasis in the Sahara of bound sermons and semi-detached tracts were *The Works of Mrs. Hannah More*; how fragrant was the memory of the writer whose biography had not yet been relegated to the realm of ancient history.

At my last visit to you I took from your book-shelves one of a set of volumes in uniform binding of "full-calf," coloured mellowly by the touch and the breath of fifty-odd years. They belonged to the dear old home library which was our intel-

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lectual stamping-ground from the time we were out of *The New York Reader* and *Cobwebs to Catch Flies*. The leaves of the book I held fell apart at *The Shepherd of Salisbury Plain*. It is illustrated by a queer wood-cut of the Shepherd sitting upon a stone, chin on hand and elbow on knee. The sheep drowse upon the turf about him ; Stonehenge is in the middle distance : the spire of Salisbury Cathedral cuts sharply into the background ; a stippled sky, whence should come such weather as “pleased him because it pleased God,” is over all.

I have heard, of late years, that Shepherd and family were portraits from life. We had never doubted the fact. How we envied little Molly her task of gathering tufts of wool left by the sheep upon briers and thorns, to be carded by a bigger sister than our Molly, then spun by the biggest, finally knit by boys and girls into stockings for winter wear ! How we revered the wee maiden when she wished it were her turn to say grace over the great platter of potatoes, the pitcher of water, and the coarse loaf !

“ I am sure I would say it heartily to-day,

for I was thinking what *poor* people do who have no salt to their potatoes ! ”

In my garden is a thrifty bush of southernwood reared from a cutting I brought away from Cowper's summer-house in Olney. I think of him when I see or smell it. More vividly present to my mind is the sprig of southernwood in the button-hole of the good-for-naught — with “shoulders as round as a tub” — sitting upon the wall of the lane along which Tawny Rachel, the fortune-teller, had told the silly servant-lass to go next Sunday afternoon, if she would meet her future husband.

And *The Search after Happiness* ! You cannot have forgotten all of the many lines we learned by heart on Sunday afternoons in the joyful spring-time, when we were obliged to clear the pages every few minutes of yellow jessamine bells and purple wistaria petals, flung down by the warm wind. We knew wistaria as “*Virgin's Bower*,” in those distant days time can never dim for us. Since then we have learned new names for many another thing — sometimes, for the worse — sometimes, thank God ! for the better.

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Thinking and dreaming over all this, I could not do otherwise than dedicate my loving study of our old favourite to you. Whatever the book may be to others, I know the leaves will give forth for you the goodly smell of lavender and thyme, of southernwood — and of rosemary.

“ *That’s* for remembrance ! ”

MARION HARLAND.

SUNNYBANK, POMPTON, N. J., June, 1900.



Cordial thanks are due from the writer of this biography to Rev. T. B. Knight, formerly of Wrington, now of Clifton, Bristol (England), for valuable assistance rendered to her in the collection of materials for her work.



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HANNAH MORE



HANNAH MORE

CHAPTER I

BIRTH—INFANCY—CHILDHOOD—EARLY DREAMS

EARLY in the eighteenth century, the grammar-school in Norwich, England, had more than a local reputation. The head master was a brother of the Reverend Samuel Clarke, D.D., the learned opponent of Hobbes, Spinoza, and other leaders in the lusty new school of free-thinking, the germs of which heresy were brought to Great Britain from the Continent. The pedagogue brother of the philosopher and theologian was especially eminent as an instructor in languages and in the classics. One of his most promising pupils in these branches was Jacob More, the son of a Suffolk gentleman. The youth was educated for the Church, and

remained, to the end of his days, a Tory and High Churchman. Before he could take orders, the estate he had been brought up to consider his rightful inheritance was lost to him by a lawsuit, and passed, with Thorpe Hall, the family mansion, a fine old place near Aldborough, Suffolk, to a cousin and an enemy.

Mr. More left his native county a poor and a disappointed man, to become the principal of a foundation-school near Stapleton in Gloucester. While holding this position, he married the daughter of a well-to-do farmer, a woman of clear, sound sense, fair education, and singular discretion.

Jacob More's mother was "a staunch Presbyterian and remarkable for the simplicity and integrity of her principles." In her hale old age she fed the active minds and lively imaginations of the elder granddaughters with stories of her uncles who had fought for the faith under Oliver Cromwell, and of her childish experiences of forbidden conventicles held in her father's house. To these unlawful assemblies flocked men and women in the dead of wintry nights, through sleet and snow, to

join in services conducted by a proscribed minister lodged secretly in the More home-stead. While the meeting was in progress, the host stood in the outer hall, drawn sword in hand, stern of visage, keen of eye, every sense on the alert for the stealthy footsteps of paid spies, or the tramp of soldiery commissioned to break up the gathering and hale the ringleaders to prison and to judgment. The narrator and her sisters walked four miles to church every Sunday and in all weathers, she would boast to her round-eyed listeners, whereas the girls of the later generation let rain or heat keep them at home. How little she had suffered from the fatigue and exposure was proved by her habit of rising before sunrise in winter and summer when she was over eighty, and that she lived to be ninety-odd.

Among other anecdotes illustrative of her strength of mind and will, was one recounting how when once seized with vertigo, threatening apoplexy, she had opened a vein in her own arm, without waiting for the surgeon, who lived three miles away. The constitutional headaches from which her granddaughter Hannah suffered all her

life long were undoubtedly an inheritance from the dauntless ancestress who used the lancet boldly to relieve pain and the menacing pressure upon the brain.

Hannah More was born in 1745, and was the youngest but one of Jacob More's five daughters,—Mary, Elizabeth, Sarah, Hannah, and Martha. He had no son. As was the commendable custom of the times, the girls received the rudiments of scholastic education at home. The Mores were not rich enough to have a governess. The mother taught her children to read and to write, taking each in the order of her age. When Hannah, at three-and-a-half, was adjudged to be old enough to learn her letters, the amazed parent discovered that she could read already, having picked up the alphabet and the knack of combining letters into words from listening to her sisters' lessons while she was supposed to be busy with her dolls in a corner of the schoolroom.

She was a fragile baby, subject to frequent attacks of illness. These she bore with patient sweetness so long as her nurse, an intelligent woman who had lived for several years in Dryden's family, would

tell her stories of the poet and repeat his verses to her. We see the precocious mite, at eight years of age, perched upon her father's knee, listening to his recitations from Dryden and Pope, and begging for others from Virgil, Horace, and Homer. He would quote from the Greek and Latin classics in the original, "to gratify her ear with the sound" (!) then translate them into English.

The scene indicated is as charming as it is singular : the baby-face lifted, as a bud to the sun, as her ear drank in the sonorous Greek and stately periods of the Latin ; the grave scholar—always more or less abstracted from the commonplaces of the present life—forgetful of her youth and sex in enjoyment of his beloved masters in literature. He "dwelt particularly," we read, "upon the parallels and wise sayings of Plutarch."

One of the many wise sayings of his pupil in her maturer years was "that the conversation of an enlightened parent or preceptor constitutes one of the best parts of education."

Mrs. Jacob More was far from being the equal of her husband in erudition. That

her mind was as good in quality as his, and her views of people and life broader and more sagacious, is apparent from her determination that her daughters should have all the instruction their intellects could assimilate. The father held, in force, the then popular prejudice against learned women, or, as he put it, "female pedantry." To please himself, he began to teach Hannah Latin and mathematics. Accustomed, as he was, to the average British schoolboy's style of study and his rate of progress, he was actually alarmed at his little girl's thirst for knowledge, and the ease and rapidity with which she mastered her lessons. His solicitude was rather lest he should develop in his own home one of the genus dreaded by all sorts and conditions of right-thinking, God-fearing Englishmen, than apprehension for the child's health of mind and body.

Against the mother's wishes, the Latin and mathematical studies were brought to an abrupt end, and the infant prodigy was turned out to pasture, mentally. Sensible modern parents would do the like, but from a different motive. The ardent mind would have worn out the delicate frame, or

given way in itself, under the unnatural pressure.

Certain features in the home-life of the Mores at this date remind us of the Alcott household in classic Concord. The scholarly, dreamy, unpractical father ; the strong-minded, strong-hearted mother ; the group of affectionate sisters, set apart from other girls of their age and station by bookish tastes and unchildlike ambitions — were the same in both homes. There is, also, much in the history of the Stapleton family which recalls the Brontës, making in their moorland parsonage a world of thought and action for themselves. Had Mrs. Brontë's health allowed her to direct the education of her daughters, and her life been spared until Charlotte was grown, the great novelist's career might have been more like Hannah More's than we now believe possible. We recall Charlotte's home-made library as described in the *Catalogue of My Books, with the Date of Their Completion*, all written in miniature pamphlets — also home-made of the backs of letters and blank fragments of account-books, — when we hear of Hannah's essays and moral tales scribbled upon stray scraps of paper

hoarded by her for that purpose. These compositions were secreted in the most remote corner of a "cubby-hole" under the eaves, in which the housemaid kept brooms, brushes, and dust-pan.

Charlotte Brontë was the story-teller at school, throwing her room-mates into paroxysms of terror and delight by gruesome tragedy and blood-curdling ghost-story. Hannah More prattled essay, poem, or tale, "always with some well-directed moral," to the younger sister who was her bed-fellow. In the excess of her admiration, the wee listener once and again sprang out of bed and rushed down-stairs for a candle and a bit of paper upon which these wonders of composition could be written down. If she waited until morning she might forget part of what she had heard, and Hannah would never repeat herself.

There were fine goings-on in the nursery at the top of the house, which was also the schoolroom in study-hours. Books were written there and read aloud to an appreciative audience of four ; after which a chair was laid upon its back, rigged out as a post-chaise with cushions, and attached by reins to another prostrate chair.

In this conveyance Hannah invited her sisters to ride with her to London. Her errand there was ever the same—to take her latest MS. to the publishers. Having disposed of it thus, and satisfactorily, she would go in state to call upon the Bishop of London. To be received as a welcome visitor by a Church dignitary, and to be hand-in-glove with publishers who were the sponsors of books, was a dream never dismissed until it was fulfilled.

In the nursery-talks of the impossible golden days each longed to have come to her, when Martha wished for money, and Sarah for a pony, Hannah's aspiration never varied. She would like to have money enough to buy a whole quire of paper for her very own use. Her wish was granted by her mother as a holiday-gift, and the child fell to work to write it full. Not a blank page remained at the end of a week. Mrs. More took the trouble to read the MSS. through. All rang changes upon one theme. The child, the mother of the woman-who-was-to-be, knew nothing of evil except from the grown-people's books she had devoured. Yet she had drawn up letters to imaginary gamesters, drunkards,

thieves, Sabbath-breakers, and poachers — pleading with them to abandon their evil works and turn to righteousness. With the optimistic faith of childhood she had, likewise, indited replies from each of the offenders against conscience and law, declaring that they were pricked in their hearts by the admonitions they had received, and were, one and all, resolved to go and sin no more. To right a crooked world was her fondest dream and loftiest ambition. Her pen was the wand that was to dispel darkness and create light.

Mr. and Mrs. More were agreed upon one point as to the education of their five bright daughters who would enter life portionless. Each should be trained to some profession or craft by which she could maintain herself when her parents could no longer provide for her. But one avenue was open for impecunious gentlewomen. The decision of children and parents was the same the Brontës were to make three-quarters of a century thereafter. The girls would establish a home-school for girls in Bristol or in the neighbourhood of that place. With this definite end in view, Mary, the eldest of the five, was entered as

a pupil in a French boarding-school at Bristol, going into town every Monday morning and returning to her home on Friday afternoon. Saturday was for her the busiest day of the seven. Assembled in the school-room, her four sisters had an elaborate *résumé* of all she had studied during the week. The mother provided them with such text-books as the senior sister used in the French seminary, and the lessons for the ensuing week were marked for them to study under the mother's supervision.

It is strongly illustrative of the family energy and a high tribute to Mrs. More's administrative ability that, by the help of the tuition acquired, second-hand, from one who was herself a mere girl, the home-class kept abreast of those which had the advantage of paid professional instructors. In the palmy days of her society triumphs, Hannah More was remarkable for the purity of her spoken French, and wrote in that language with ease and propriety. The foundation of this proficiency was laid in the Saturday drill in the nursery school-room. Practice was gained through the Mores' association with several French officers, prisoners-of-war on parole, who

lodged in Stapleton. They were welcome and frequent visitors to Mr. More's house, and ten-year-old Hannah was gradually established in the office of interpreter between them and her parents. Mrs. More was ignorant of the language except for the smattering she had picked up from listening to her eldest daughter's instructions to her juniors, and from superintending their studies in that tongue. Mr. More read French with as much facility as he read Greek and Latin, but, as with many another scholar, spoken French was a worse than dead language to his ears.

The courtly guests made a great pet of the pretty and clever go-between, and, but for her sensible mother, would have turned her head with their flatteries. With that eclectic property of mind and taste which was a natural endowment and, in after days, was to contribute largely to her popularity and usefulness, she seized upon all that could accrue to her real benefit in this intercourse, and the evil passed harmlessly by her. To those months of companionship with polished citizens of the gayest world known to civilised peoples, she owed much of the suave grace of

manner and address which, in a provincial *débutante*, captivated and puzzled fashionable London. Her rare gift of repartee was brought into play in bandying wits with the officers, and polished by the medium of the facile, ingenious tongue. While with them she thought, as well as conversed, in French. Her father's somewhat formal harangues, and the plain, common-sensible observations of her mother, were unconsciously adapted by the sensitive, tactful interpreter to harmonise with the graceful phraseology and lively turns of speech in which the replies were couched.

Hannah was but twelve years of age when Mary opened the long-anticipated school in the cathedral town of Bristol, then, as now, remarkable for the general culture of the middle classes, and the number of scholarly and distinguished people who were born there, or who had chosen it as a place of residence.

Thomas Chatterton was a boy of five, playing and dreaming in the Cathedral close where his uncle was a verger, when the Misses More announced to the public the establishment of their Select School for Young Ladies, where all the branches of a solid and

genteel English education were to be taught, including geography, with the use of the globes, ornamental needlework, painting upon velvet, and music ; also, French and Italian. Amos Cottle, the book-loving bookseller, whose admiration for Wordsworth and Southey tempted Byron's lash and won for the Bristol tradesman immortality in two lines of *English Bards and Scotch Reviewers*, was the Mores' contemporary and friend. Peach, an erudite linen-draper, the chum and critic of David Hume, affiliated with the accomplished father and daughters soon after their removal to his native town. Ferguson, the astronomer, a frequent lecturer before literary associations in Bristol, was another cherished acquaintance of a family which, at once, took rank among the best people of the conservative old city.





CHAPTER II

THE BRISTOL SCHOOL FOR YOUNG LADIES—
HANNAH'S PROFICIENCY IN LEARNING—
"SEARCH AFTER HAPPINESS"—FIRST LOVE
AFFAIR—MR. TURNER

THE More seminary was a close corporation. Mary was principal ; Elizabeth, housekeeper ; Sarah, vice-principal ; Hannah and ten-year-old Martha were enrolled among the scholars of the first term.

The valuable library owned by Jacob More, as a country gentleman dwelling in his ancestral halls, had shared in the wreck of his fortunes. Hannah was made acquainted with the classics—English, Greek, and Latin—through her father's retentive and teeming memory. What she had heard had but whetted her appetite for the banquet awaiting her in Bristol, where books by the score were bought for the

school and for the teachers of *belles-lettres*. The next four years were a continuous revel to the eager intellect, a feast of fat things not appreciable by the jaded palates of those born to a plethora of modern literature. She studied Milton, Pope, Shakespeare, and Dryden with avidity, read and re-read Addison until her style took form and color from that master of perfect English. Hundreds of pages were covered with essays, poems, and stories,—all moral and instructive. At sixteen, she was moved to write an ode expressive of her enjoyment of a series of lectures upon eloquence delivered in Bristol by Thomas Sheridan, author, actor, and teacher of elocution, the accomplished father of a more brilliant son, Richard Brinsley Sheridan. A friend of the Mores took the pains to show the lines to the lecturer, who expressed surprise at the age of the author, and asked for an introduction to her. "The acquaintance, when obtained, increased his admiration for her dawning genius," says a stilted biography written a few years after her death.

From this we cull a pleasing anecdote of the impression made by Hannah's conversation upon a physician called in to attend

“The Search after Happiness” 17

the girl for a serious indisposition. At his third or fourth visit, he plunged into literary and scientific talk as soon as he took his seat by the patient's bed, and forgot for the next hour why he had come. Starting up in a hurry upon discovering the length of his stay, he took an abrupt leave, checking himself on the stairs to call back—“How are you to-day, my poor child?”

The Search after Happiness: A Drama, dryly characterised by one biographer as “a highly-improving Pastoral,” was written by Hannah More at seventeen, to be acted by her sisters' pupils in the school-room. It became, straightway, immensely popular in other places and seminaries.

In a now desolated Southern home I pored over a thin, leather-backed copy of this highly moral drama fifty years ago, and found in it much interesting food for thought. The frontispiece, disfigured, as were the printed pages, with the mysterious yellow thumb-marks of time, showed the fair seekers, clad in short-waisted gowns, and wide sashes tied directly under the arm-pits, garlands in their hair, high-heeled shoes, and trim ankles plainly visible under the brief skirts then considered

decorous, long gloves coming up to the elbows upon the hands linked in a loving chain, as they sallied forth to consult the learned shepherdess, Urania, as to the hiding-place of the "coy fugitive," Happiness. I fancied the central figure, "Cleora," the learned maiden, must look like Hannah More, and was sorry when she made the damaging admission—

"This the chief transport I from Science drew,
That all might know how much Cleora knew."

In reality, this shaft of satire, the most polished in the whole production, was never deserved by her, then or ever. As infant, girl, and woman, she had enough honest praise and polite flattery to turn any except a phenomenally strong head. However priggish her invariable bias for morality may seem to us, she was ever modest to humility, thoughtful for others before she gave a thought to her own welfare or advancement, enjoying all the good to be extracted from her daily life with the simplicity of a child.

In the performance of the drama, over which the gay and the sober Bristol people went wild, the author was also stage-man-

“ The Search after Happiness ” 19

ager, costumer, and prompter, succeeding so well in the combined capacities that the play ran through several nights, receiving the highest commendations from the local press. A Bristol paper printed, about the same time, an English translation of an Italian opera Hannah More had pencilled with flying fingers while the opera was in progress, for the benefit of a companion who complained that she could not comprehend “ what it all meant.” She had made equal advances in Spanish, and French was still a favourite tongue with her.

The Wesleyan revival gained many converts to the new movement in Bristol while the Mores lived there, but, as is apparent from the opera episode, Hannah did not incline to the asceticism inculcated by the leaders of the sect and practised in outward observances by their converts. Between their Presbyterian forbears and their father's High-Churchly proclivities the Misses More had fallen upon the safe middle ground of evangelical Episcopacy, a comely body informed by a devout soul.

“ They were thoughtful, religious women after the eighteenth-century pattern,” says Miss Yonge, “ devout and careful of their

own souls, but never looking beyond the ordinary duties about them."

At eighteen, Hannah was an assistant in the family school, now one of the fixed facts of Bristol, of which the citizens were justly proud. In Bristol society she was a conspicuous figure, and might have been a belle had she cared for such a distinction. Rather below than above the medium height of women, she was far prettier than the average young girl. Her portrait, painted by Opie when she was forty, gives a mature reproduction—not a faded copy—of what she was at twenty. Her features were delicate, clearly cut, and refined in every detail. Her hair, fine and abundant, was powdered after the fashion of the times, enhancing the soft pallor of her complexion; her dark eyes were well opened and full of light and expression. Her manners were always those of the gentle thoroughbred, with not a touch of the school-mistress's primness. Her conversation, in an age when conversation was studied as a fine art, was both sensible and brilliant.

"Just the sort of young creature," comments a biographer, "whose fresh, innocent intelligence is especially captivating to

the elderly men with whom she converses, fearless of all idea of coquetry."

She was twenty-two when she accompanied two of the pupils of the More seminary upon a holiday visit to Belmont, a country-house picturesquely situated among the hills bounding the valley of the Avon. The proprietor, Mr. Turner (whether widower or bachelor is uncertain), was a man of wealth and character. The eminently decorous annalist quoted a few pages back thus sketches him :

" He was a man of strict honour and integrity ; had received a liberal education, and, among other recommendations of an intellectual character, had cultivated a taste for poetry, and shown much skill in the embellishments of rural scenery, and the general improvement of his estate. But for the estate of matrimony he appears to have wanted that essential qualification, a cheerful and composed temper."

His temper was sufficiently composed to allow him to discover quickly that the companions of his two cousins on this holiday outing were two more than ordinarily charming young women. Martha, otherwise Patty, More was with her sister. She was a girl of much intelligence and vivacity, but not comparable to the flower of the

More family, who was two years her senior. The host was forty-two, yet entered cheerfully, for the nonce, into the pursuits and gayety of his fair guests. The proprieties were conserved by the residence at Belmont of an elderly gentlewoman who presided over the household. There were drives along the river, excursions to various places of interest in the vicinity, and much rambling in the extensive grounds which the owner meant to make the pride of the countryside by carrying out his schemes of intelligent landscape-gardening. Hannah, albeit city-bred, had a quick eye for natural beauties and artistic capabilities. She selected sites for grottoes, artificial ponds, and ingenious cascades, and, at the host's request, wrote appropriate mottoes, verses, and sentimental apostrophes for each,—a fad in great favour then. It was a fantasy of which there are still extant a few illustrations even in our country,—to engross these inscriptions in clerkly characters, or in old English letters, in black paint upon white boards, and to attach them to trees or rocks among the scenes which had inspired them. Mr. Turner had this done with neatness and despatch, out of

compliment to the author, and, incidentally, to the beauties of his demesne. The placards, "exactly like notices to trespassers," were left untouched upon the trees to which they were affixed during that love-making, midsummer vacation, until rusting nails and rotting boards fell to pieces. The last disappeared less than fifty years ago.

When Hannah More returned to Bristol, she was no stranger to the sentiment she had awakened in the heart of her elderly host. He followed her and pressed his suit so earnestly that she was soon betrothed, with the prospect of so speedy a marriage that it was not worth her while to resume school duties. She began, instead, the preparation of a trousseau suitable for the lady of Belmont Manor. The wedding-day was fixed, and the last stitch taken in the last gown ; the bride-cake was ordered, and the bridesmaids were chosen from her sympathising sisters,—when Mr. Turner's cheerfulness, or his composure, played him false, and he begged for a postponement of the ceremony. We have not been told—we never shall be told now—upon what pretext the extraordinary request was based. It must have seemed

reasonable to Hannah, for she made no protest, and allowed another day to be named. Before this arrived, the bridegroom again showed signs of uneasiness, and at length asked for a second postponement. The third delay snapped the strained thread of the elder sisters' forbearance.

"Her sisters and friends interfered, and would not permit her to be so treated and trifled with," testified a family connection of the Turners, many years later. "He continued in the wish to marry her, but her friends, after his former conduct, and on other accounts, persevered in keeping up her determination not to renew the engagement."

The friend most prominent in this praiseworthy decision was Dr. (afterward Sir) James Stonehouse. This gentleman, an eminent physician of Northampton, had given up his profession on account of his health, and when this was restored entered the Church. He was a near neighbour and close friend of the Mores, and especially attached to Hannah, encouraging her in her literary pursuits, and, so far as in him lay, supplementing the abstracted, unpractical father, who seems to have been

content to be supported by his daughters during the last years of his life. Sir James acted with decision when applied to by the worried sisters, an appeal seconded by Hannah's weary eyes. Her position was more than painful. She had been at great expense in preparing her trousseau ; she had lost months of valuable time ; her suitor's vacillations had made her ridiculous in the eyes of acquaintances and Bristol gossips. When her fatherly friend bade her release Mr. Turner, at once and definitely, from the violated engagement, she took his advice and stood to her resolution.

There was a final, and what must have been a trying, interview between the two lately betrothed parties. After agreeing to separate by "mutual consent," a new element was introduced into the vexed affair, so singular to our modes of thought and etiquette, that I prefer to leave the description to Miss More's quaint biographer, William Roberts, Esq., who wrote her *Memoirs* within three years after she departed this mortal life.

"In their last conversation, Mr. T. proposed to settle an annuity upon her, a proposal which was with dignity and firmness rejected, and the intercourse appeared to be

absolutely at an end. Let it be recorded, however, in justice to the memory of this gentleman, that his mind was ill at ease till an interview was obtained with Dr. Stonehouse, to whom he expressed his intention to secure to Miss More, with whom he had considered his union as certain, an annual sum which might enable her to devote herself to her literary pursuits, and compensate, in some degree, for the robbery he had committed upon her time.

“Dr. Stonehouse consulted with the friends of the parties, and the consultation culminated in a common opinion that, all things considered, a part of the sum proposed might be accepted without the sacrifice of delicacy or propriety, and the settlement was made without the knowledge of the lady, Dr. Stonehouse consenting to become the agent and trustee.

“It was not, however, till some time after the affair had been thus concluded, that the consent of Miss More could be obtained by the importunity of her friends.

“The regard and respect of Mr. Turner for Miss More was continued through his life ; her virtues and excellences were his favourite theme among his intimate friends, and at his death he bequeathed her a thousand pounds.”

Beyond what was written by the serious annalist sixty-odd years ago, absolutely nothing is known of this strange and important episode in the life of her who was to become a celebrity in the English world of fashion and literature. The truth, baldly stated, seems to be that the elderly country

gentleman, while fascinated out of his conservative senses by the bright eyes and witty talk of his young guest when he was with her, was visited by harrowing doubts, when the glamour cooled in his absence from the enchantress, as to the wisdom of resigning bachelor freedom and changing habits hardened by forty-odd years' indulgence. Of course it is on the cards that influences of which rumour dared not prate may have added their weight to detach him from the woman he had confidently expected to marry. We have no warrant to go back of the record. When the ache and the smart of the misadventure were thoroughly cured in Hannah More's heart, the humour of the closing act must have commended itself to her lively imagination.

Mr. Turner was a squire, hence a magistrate, and versed in the law. He arraigned himself in the Court of Conscience as guilty of an unjustifiable breach of promise ; judged, convicted, and sentenced himself, and would not release the offender until he had paid the uttermost farthing.



CHAPTER III

THE BROKEN ENGAGEMENT—FIRST VISIT TO LONDON—DR. JOHNSON AND THE REY- NOLDSSES

IT is not a matter of surprise that the many untoward and distressing circumstances attendant upon Hannah More's betrothal should have begotten in her a dread of similar complications. But since she never professed to be "in love" with Mr. Turner at any period of the affair, and suffered more in pride and delicacy than in heart at the outcome of the entanglement, the strength of her resolution never again to think of marrying was remarkable and abnormal. She told her sisters, calmly, that she "put all such ideas out of her mind for all time," and resumed her intellectual and social duties as if the episode had been an incident, annoying for a time,

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and now dismissed from speech and thought as if it had not been. Her trousseau was taken into every-day wear ; she discussed *belles-lettres* and MSS. with Sir James Stonehouse instead of Mr. Turner's vagaries.

When, less than two years after the rupture of her engagement, she had another offer of marriage from a younger and more stable suitor, she negatived it with gentle dignity.

“And,” says Mr. Roberts, “as it happened in the former case, the attachment of the proposer was succeeded by a cordial respect, which was met on her part by a corresponding sentiment, and ended only with his existence. These incidents the reader of delicacy will duly appreciate.”

The next four years passed quietly, always busily, and, as we gather from an occasional anecdote belonging to this interval, not unhappily. One of these has to do with her friendly intimacy with Dr. Langhorne, an accomplished scholar of whom much was expected in his day, but whose letters to his clever protégée are his only claim upon our consideration. One of these stories shows us the pair of friends

strolling along the sands at the little watering place of Weston-super-Mare, where Miss More was sojourning for her health. Pausing where the sand was smooth and damp, the physician wrote this fulsome doggerel with his cane :

“ Along this shore
Walked Hannah More ;
Waves, let this record last.
Sooner shall ye,
Proud earth and sea,
Than what she writes, be past.”

Upon the same surface, using the butt of her riding-crop as a crayon, Hannah replied :

“ Some firmer basis, polished Langhorne, choose
On which to write the dictates of thy Muse ;
Her strains in solid characters rehearse,
And be thy tablets lasting as thy verse.”

She was twenty-seven years old when the oft-rehearsed journey to London, the Mecca of nursery-dreams and girlish ambitions, was made in body as in spirit. Bristol is less than a hundred and twenty miles from the metropolis, and the transit by rail a matter of a few hours. Hannah More, her sister Martha, and a lady alluded

to in the Mores' letters as "the fair Clarissa," took a post-chaise for what "was then a perilous journey through ditch-like roads beset by highwaymen." She chronicles their safe arrival in a letter to a friend a week after their perils were overpast. They were "comfortably situated in Henrietta Street," and beginning to enjoy London with the unsated relish of educated provincials. Already they had "dined, drunk tea, and supped" at Sir Joshua Reynolds's house, where there was "a brilliant circle of both sexes. Not, in general, literary, 'though partly so," adds Hannah, judicially, and that "we were not suffered to come away till one." As dinner was probably served not later than three P.M., and the visit included three meals, the circle had need to be brilliant to beguile time of tediousness.

Miss Reynolds, Sir Joshua's sister, had promised to introduce her to "dear Dr. Johnson," as soon as he should return to town. From the beginning to the end of her sojourn in the Enchanted Land of her visions, he was to her the centre of attraction. Of the "brilliant circle" she remarks in another letter: "'Though the bright sun

(Dr. Johnson) did not cheer us with his rays, yet we had a constellation of the Agreeables." She had already met Garrick, and the foundation was laid for the warm attachment to him and his charming wife that was to signify much to the three in days to come. Mrs. Montague, one of the leaders of the "*Bas Bleu*," had thrown open her doors to the Bristol strangers, introducing them to other constellations. They went to Hampton Court, to Twickenham, and to see *The Rivals*, a new comedy by Sheridan. The acting was indifferent and the play so nearly a failure that Hannah's good-nature leads her to apologise for it :

"I think he ought to be treated with great indulgence. Much is to be forgiven in an author of three-and-twenty, whose genius is likely to be his chief inheritance. I love him for the sake of his ingenious and admirable mother. On the whole, I was tolerably entertained."

Comment upon the mutability of popular opinion would be superfluous.

Most of her letters from London are, unluckily, dateless, but since two of her sisters were with her when she, at last, met Johnson, the important event would seem to have been postponed until her second

pilgrimage to Mecca. Obliging Miss Reynolds was their cicerone on the tremendous occasion, and the lion was upon exhibition in Sir Joshua Reynolds's drawing-room. On the way up-stairs the host tempered Hannah's joyous flutter by warning her that the Great One "might be in one of his moods of sadness and silence."

Instead of which, behold the Lexicographer walking about the room with a pet macaw belonging to Sir Joshua upon his big fist, and unbending his massive mind by talking to it. Still more surprising was the gracious countenance turned upon the blushing votary, and "his accosting her with a verse from a Morning Hymn which she had written at the desire of Sir James Stonehouse. In the same pleasant humour he continued the whole evening." For which hosts and guests were admiringly grateful.

Not a drop of cynical amusement mingles with the pleasure with which we read Sally More's epistolary narratives of her younger sister's reception in the new and wonderful world they had entered. They are so naïve in their delight, so redolent of pure enjoyment in her darling's successes, with never

a thought of her own comparative insignificance, as to disarm criticism of what Mr. Roberts calls "the effusions of an ardent and intelligent country girl, who found herself suddenly introduced to the choicest society of the metropolis." Sally was more than ardent and intelligent. She had a lively sense of fun and a command of her pen that fitted her, subsequently, to be Hannah's able *collaborateuse* in *The Cheap Repository Tracts*. But to her letters, written — as we must bear in mind — for the sisters left at home :

"Since I wrote last, Hannah has been introduced by Miss Reynolds to Baretti and Edmund Burke (the sublime and beautiful Burke !) From a large party of literary persons assembled at Sir Joshua's she received the most encouraging compliments, and the spirit with which she returned them was acknowledged by all present, as Miss Reynolds informed poor Us. Miss R. repeats her little poem by heart, with which also, the great Johnson is much pleased."

Another letter fairly bulges with the great Johnson. "Abyssinia's Johnson ! Dictionary Johnson ! *Rambler's*, *Idler's*, and *Irene's* Johnson ! The most amiable and obliging of women—Miss Reynolds," has taken the sisters to "Dr. Johnson's very own house."

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“Miss Reynolds told the doctor of all our rapturous exclamations on the road. He shook his scientific head at Hannah and said, ‘She was a silly thing!’ When our visit was ended, he called for his hat (as it rained) to attend us down a very long entry to our coach, and not Rasselas could have acquitted himself more *en cavalier*. We are engaged with him at Sir Joshua’s, Wednesday evening. What do you think of us?

“I forgot to mention that, not finding Johnson in the little parlour, when we came in, Hannah seated herself in his great chair, hoping to catch a little ray of his genius. When he heard it, he laughed heartily, and told her it was a chair in which he never sat.”

The Great Bear so seldom put himself to the trouble of being tolerably polite, that we do well to make grateful note of these two audiences, granted to this one of his worshippers. With all his affectation of contempt for the opinions of his fellow-men, he was as vain as the most empty-headed coxcomb who strutted in Piccadilly. Adulation was the breath of his nostrils; no incense was too rank for his taste. Fanny Burney, another of his adorers, thus paints him to her confidential crony, Mr. Crisp :

“He had naturally a noble figure; tall, stout, and authoritative; but he stoops horribly; his back is quite round; his mouth is continually opening and shutting, as if he were chewing something. He has a singular method of twirling his fingers, and twisting his hands;

his vast body is in constant agitation, see-sawing backwards and forwards ; his feet are never quiet, and his whole person looks often as if it were going to roll itself, quite voluntarily, from his chair to the floor. . . . His dress, considering the times, and that he had meant to put on all his best becomes—for he was engaged to dine with a very fine party at Mrs. Montague's—was as much out of the common road as his figure. He had a large, full, bushy wig, a snuff-color coat, with gold (or, peradventure, brass) buttons, but no ruffles to his doughty fists ; and, not, I suppose, to be taken for a Blue, 'though going to the Blue Queen, he had on very coarse black worsted stockings."

Fanny goes on to show her idol — Mrs. Thrale's, Mrs. Montague's, Hannah More's idol — pulling a book from the shelf, "and, standing aloof from the company, which he seemed clean and clear to forget, beginning without further ceremony and very composedly, to read to himself as intently as if he had been alone in his own study."

And — "we were languishing, fretting, *expiring* — to hear him talk — not to see him read !"

Yet Fanny Burney, in the noon-tide of *Evelina's* popularity, repeats in a twitter of rapture to Mr. Crisp that Dr. Johnson had said "some sentences in that novel might do honour to Richardson."

Furthermore, "that there was never a

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better character drawn by Harry Fielding or any other author, than her Mr. Smith !”

“I almost poked myself under the table! Never did I feel so delicious a confusion since I was born.”

More soberly as to phraseology, but with equal gratification, Hannah More writes home :

“Dr. Johnson asked me how I liked the new tragedy of *Braganza*. I was afraid to speak before them all, as I knew a diversity of opinion prevailed among the company. However, as I thought it a less evil to dissent from the opinion of a fellow-creature than to tell a falsity, I ventured to give my sentiments, and was satisfied with Johnson’s answering — ‘You are right, Madam !’”

Happy, unselfish Sally writes of another “occasion” :

“Tuesday evening we drank tea at Sir Joshua’s with Dr. Johnson. Hannah is certainly a great favourite. She was placed next to him and they had the entire conversation to themselves. They were both in remarkably high spirits. It was certainly her lucky night. I never heard her say so many good things. The Old Genius was extremely jocular, and the young one very pleasant. You would have imagined we had been at some comedy had you heard our peals of laughter. They indeed tried which could pepper the highest, and it is not clear to me that the lexicographer was really the highest seasoner.”

The Bristol chrysalis had cast her shell quite away, but could never reconcile the life of the social butterfly with her home-made conscience. When dressed for "a great dinner," she steadies the astounding construction reared upon her head by the perruquier while she writes to a sister of her disgust at the

"present absurd, extravagant and fantastical way of dressing the hair.

"Simplicity and modesty are things so much exploded that the very names are no longer remembered. I have just escaped from one of the most fashionable disfigurers. . . . I absolutely blush at myself and turn from the glass with as much caution as a vain beauty just arisen from the small-pox."

One of the clever bits that spiced her letters and her talk compares the

"happy and easy way of filling a book with criticism of some eminent poet and with monstrous extracts," to a "species of cookery. They cut up their author into chops, and, by adding a little crumbled bread of their own, and tossing it up a little, they present it as a fresh dish. You are to dine upon the poet ; the critic supplies the garnish, yet has the credit as well as the profit, of the whole entertainment."

The Italian Opera, as given in London, jarred upon her ideas of fitness and propriety.

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“Bear me, some God, O quickly bear me hence,
To wholesome solitude, the muse of—

‘Sense,’ I was going to add in the words of Pope, ‘till I remembered that ‘pence’ had a more appropriate meaning, and was as good a rhyme,” is an oft-quoted passage from her sisterly correspondence.

“This apostrophe broke from me, on coming from the (London) Opera — the first I ever did, the last I trust I shall ever go to. Yet I find the same people are seen at the Opera every night — an amusement written in a language the greater part of them do not understand, and performed by such a set of beings! Going to the Opera, like getting drunk, is a sin that carries its own punishment with it, and that a very severe one.”

Her rector, Dr. Stonehouse, had written to her kindly and seriously relative to the Sunday evening gathering in Mrs. Montague’s salon. She sends through her sister her thanks for his “seasonable admonitions,” adding that Conscience had infused a drop of wormwood into the cup of pleasure before she heard from him.

Sabbath-keeping in the Bristol household was Presbyterian in strictness, and the blandishments of town society could not do away with the habit based upon her

parents' principles. She spent the next Sunday afternoon at Mrs. Boscawen's in company with Mrs. Carter, Mrs. Montague, and Mrs. Elizabeth Chapone. The conversation was sprightly, but serious, yet we detect a smack of puritanical intolerance in the *sequitur* :

“They are all ladies of high character for piety, of which, however, I do not think their visiting on Sundays any proof, for 'though their conversation is edifying, the example is bad. . . . The more I see of the 'honoured, famed, and great,' the more I see of the littleness, the unsatisfactoriness of all created good, and that no earthly pleasure can fill up the wants of the immortal principle within. . . . Tell me, then, what is it to be wise? This, you will say, is exhibiting the unfavourable side of the picture of humanity, but it is the right side, the side that shows the likeness.”





CHAPTER IV

LONDON AGAIN—"SIR ELDRED OF THE BOWER"

—THE GARRICKS AND THE COTTONS

HANNAH MORE'S third visit to the great metropolis had a specific purpose. An important part in the nursery dream was still unfulfilled. She had consorted with authors, and been hailed as a kindred spirit by celebrities ; the visit to the publisher was now to become fact and history.

"I have been so fed with flattering attentions that I think I will venture to try what is my real value," was her shrewd remark after the incense had cooled and her nerves recovered from their flutter in the quiet commonplaceness of sober, commercial Bristol. Her test was two ballads, in a vein that seems to us a tame imitation of Percy's *Reliques*.

The moral element must be ingeniously

instilled into the story and poem of to-day ; stirred in, as the cook introduces kitchen bouquet, a suspicion of cayenne into an *entrée*, or vanilla into custard. The compounding is done according to Sydney Smith's salad recipe :

“ Let garlic's atoms lurk within the bowl,
And unseen, animate the whole.”

Hannah More's moral was the *pièce de résistance* in every literary feast she offered to the public.

In the longer of the two poems she carried in her portmanteau up to town, *Sir Eldred of the Bower*, the moral and the tragic run neck-and-neck, from post to finish, but the former is the favourite with the author, and apparently with her public.

It is a decisive proof of the completeness of her recovery from the unhappiness consequent upon her ill-starred betrothal, that the second poem was a revision of verses written during the mid-summer vacation at Belmont, and doubtless read in their rough form to Mr. Turner. They were founded upon a legend of the Avon valley, a story of man's fickleness and late useless remorse, woman's constancy and death. Had

the writer's heart retained the slightest sensitiveness on the subject of her own slighted affection and her wooer's vacillation, she would not have invited the probe of memory.

Cadell, the fashionable publisher of the year, not only accepted the brace of poems, but paid her what she considered a handsome sum for them, engaging to supplement this by a second payment, upon publication, that would bring up the amount to what Goldsmith had received for *The Deserted Village*, six years before. Miss Reynolds, Mrs. Montague, Mrs. Chaponne, Mrs. Vesey, and others of the *Bas-Bleu* coterie fell in love with the verses out of hand; *Sir Eldred* was the theme in all polite circles; the Garricks were enraptured, the eminent tragedian giving parlour recitations of the new publication to tearful drawing-room audiences. Furthermore, he wrote some clever verses descriptive of the chagrin of man at a woman's triumph until Apollo offers a *placebo*:

“ ‘ True,’ cries the god of verse, ‘ ’t is mine,
And now the farce is o’er.
To vex proud man, I wrote each line,
And gave them Hannah More ! ’ ”

Best of all, Johnson not only pronounced *Sir Eldred* and the Avondale legend of *The Bleeding Rock* vastly superior to the embryo Bishop's *Reliques of Ancient English Poetry*, but sealed his approval by the condescension of an added verse to the body of *Sir Eldred*.

"He has invited himself to drink tea with us tomorrow, that we may read *Sir Eldred* together," writes Hannah to a sister. "I shall not tell you what he said of it, but to me the best part of his flattery was that he repeats all the best stanzas by heart with the energy, 'though not with the grace, of a Garrick."

She was never nearer betraying unbecoming and more uncharacteristic vanity than when her sister Martha wrote to Bristol of the danger of a wedding between *Sir Eldred's* mother and "the father of my much loved *Irene*."

This last-named ponderous drama was, by now, defunct to the general reader, but had run for over a week at Drury Lane in 1749, and netted the author a sum equal to fifteen hundred dollars. With authorly fatuousness not peculiar to himself, Johnson rated it highly, and Hannah's acquiescence in his judgment was a stroke of guileless diplomacy.

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“Mrs. Montague says,” continues the sisterly epistle before us,—“‘If tender words are the precursors of conubial engagements, we may expect great things, for it is nothing but “Child,” “Little Fool,” “Love,” and “Dearest.”’ After much critical discourse he turns around to me, and with one of his most amiable looks—which must be seen to form the least idea of it—he says—‘I have heard that you are engaged in the useful and honourable employment of teaching young ladies?’”

Won by his amiable affability, Martha gives him the “history of our birth, parentage, and education.” After hearing it all—

“‘I love you both!’ cried the Inamorato. ‘I love you all five! I never was at Bristol. I will come on purpose to see you. What! five women live happily together! I will come and see you. I have spent a happy evening. I am glad I came! God forever bless you! You live lives to shame duchesses!’

“He took his leave with so much warmth and tenderness that we were quite affected at his manner.”

We twentieth-century readers would be more affected had we not heard the tender-hearted boor call Fanny Burney names as sweet as those he showers upon the mother of *Sir Eldred*—also—“a little toad!” while he tweaked one of her pink ears.

The affectionate elder sister appends to the letter which I have quoted in part :

“If Hannah’s head stands proof against all the adulation and kindness of the great folks here, why then, I will venture to say that nothing of this kind will hurt her hereafter. Two carriages at the door ! Mrs. Boscawen and Dr. Johnson ; the latter to take us to an auction of pictures ; the former paid a short visit that she might not break in upon our engagements. Dr. Johnson and Hannah, last night, had a violent quarrel, ’till at length laughter ran so high on all sides that argument was confounded in noise. The gallant youth at one in the morning set us down at our lodgings.”

Hannah’s head was steady enough to endure four or five hours of study, daily, and of one day she records, “I wrote ten hours yesterday.” Good taste and common sense revolted at certain London fashions. She “hates admixture of finery and meanness” ; she finds her “dislike of what are called public diversions” greater than ever,—except a play. When Garrick has left the stage she “could be very well contented to relinquish plays also, and to live in London without ever again setting her foot in a public place.”

Her scathing criticism of women’s society costumes is too good to be abridged :

“I am annoyed by the foolish absurdity of the present mode of dress. Some ladies carry on their heads a large quantity of fruit, and yet they would despise



PORTRAIT OF DAVID GARRICK

FROM A DESIGN BY N. DANCE

a poor, useful member of society who carried it there for the purpose of selling it for bread. Some, at the back of their perpendicular caps, hang four or five ostrich feathers of different colours. Spirit of Addison ! thou pure and gentle shade, arise ! Thou, who, with such fine humour and such polished sarcasm, didst lash the cherry-coloured hood and the party patches, and cut down, with a trenchant sickle, a whole harvest of follies and absurdities—awake ! The follies thou didst lash were but the beginning of follies, and the absurdities thou didst censure were but the seeds of absurdities. Oh, that thy master-spirit, speaking and chiding in thy graceful page, could recall the blushes and collect the scattered and mutilated remnants of female modesty ! ”

What she did enjoy with her whole heart was the company she met at the Garricks’ town-house, where she was a favoured *habituée*, and intimate association with the members of the *Bas Bleu*, some of whose names appear in a much-talked-of anonymous skit published in the *Morning Herald* of March 12, 1782 :

“ Hannah More’s pathetic pen,
Painting high the impassioned scene :
Carter’s piety and learning ;
Little Burney’s quick discerning ;
Cowley’s neatly-pointed wit
Healing those her satires hit.

Let Chapone retain a place ;
And the mother of her Grace,

Each art of conversation knowing,
High-bred, elegant Boscawen ;
Thrale, in whose expressive eyes
Sits a soul above disguise :
Lucan, Levison, Greville, Crewe,
Fertile-minded Montague,"—etc.

Deep, wholesome content, with joy-beads rising from the bottom, to glitter upon the surface of the cup, is in a portion of another home-bulletin :

" It is not possible for anything on earth to be more agreeable to my taste than my present manner of life. I am so much at my ease ; have a great many hours at my own disposal ; read my own books, and see my own friends, and, whenever I please, may join the most polished and delightful society in the world. Our breakfasts are little literary societies. There is generally company at meals, as they [the Garricks] think it saves time by avoiding the necessity of seeing people at other times. Mr. Garrick sets the highest value upon his time of anybody I know. From dinner to tea we laugh, chat, and talk nonsense. The rest of the time is generally devoted to study. I detest and avoid public places more than ever, and should make a miserably fine lady. What most people come to London *for*, would keep me *from* it."

All the same, in a " moderate party of forty " agreeable people assembled at Mrs. Vesey's, there were a dozen titled lords

and ladies; and a "select company — much too large to please me" — at Sir Joshua Reynolds's Richmond house comprised Gibbon, the Burke brothers, Lord Pitt, and Lord Mahon, together with David Garrick and other notables, while Lord North and "our noble neighbours, the Pembrokes," were frequent guests. Garrick gave her a ticket to Westminster Hall where "Elizabeth, calling herself Duchess Dowager of Kingston," had a State trial — "a sight, which for beauty and magnificence exceeded anything which those who were never present at a coronation, or a trial by peers, can have the least notion of." Mrs. Garrick and Miss More, in full dress, were the guests of the Duke of Newcastle, whose house adjoined the Hall.

Hannah's graphic description of the scene has this homely touch:

"I must not omit one of the best things. We had only to open a door to get at a very fine cold collation of all sorts of meats and wines, with tea, etc., a privilege confined to those who belonged to the Duke of Newcastle. I fancy the peeresses would have been glad of our places at the trial, for I saw Lady Derby and the Duchess of Devonshire with their work-bags full of good things. Their rank and dignity did not exempt them from the 'villainous appetites' of eating and drinking."

In a word, the brilliant provincial — the ex-teacher of Bristol tradesmen's daughters — was, as our irreverent college-lads would phrase it, "in the swim" of London life, and, disclaim her gratification as she may, we must recall, in reading the frank and funny letters she never dreamed would meet other eyes than those for which they were written, the passionate simplicity of Glory McWhirk's soliloquy—"Such a time as this! such a beautiful time! And to think that *I* should be in it!"

David Garrick, Hannah More's always friend and present host, was now sixty-five years of age and just beginning his last round of professional engagements. Miss More saw him in each of his great parts, including Benedict, Hamlet, Lear, and Abel Drugger, a character in Ben Jonson's play, *The Alchemist*.

"When I see him play any part for the last time, I can only compare my mixed sensations to what I suppose I should feel if a friend were to die and leave me a rich legacy," she laments. "I feel almost as much pain as pleasure. He is quite happy in the prospect of his release."

In reciprocation of her admiration he

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dubbed her "Nine" —signifying that she was the embodiment of all the Muses, a title he took into every-day use. It was surmised that her strictures upon the horticultural head-dress of the day instigated him, in personating Sir John Brute in Vanbrugh's play of *The Provoked Wife*, to a prank which fairly laughed the fashion out of court. In a drunken revel, Sir John rigs himself in a new gown belonging to his wife, and parades the street until arrested for disturbing the public peace. Garrick added to the gown "a whole kitchen-garden upon his head." Miniature cucumber-frames were worn as a tiara, and carrots as earrings.

Hannah cannot withhold a smart slap at the detested mode in a lively letter written from the country-house of her "cousin Cotton," in the vicinity of Thorpe Hall, where her father was born. "A great number of Cottons of all ages, sexes, and characters" was convoked to meet the newly discovered relative whose father had been like a dead man out of mind to the prosperous clan during the long years of his adversity. Miss More's celebrity, if based, as we must be allowed to think,

upon very slight achievements up to this time, was, nevertheless, indisputable. She figured in the public prints as a wit and a woman of fashion, and she was warmly bidden to the halls of her ancestors, a venerable "lady of the house taking a great deal of pains to explain to me genealogies, alliances, and intermarriages, not one word of which can I remember,"—reports Hannah with airy carelessness unpropitious to the growth of reverence the genealogist would have instilled.

"I eat brown bread and custards like a native ; and we have a pretty, agreeable, laudable custom of getting tipsy twice a day upon Herefordshire cider. The other night we had a great deal of company — eleven damsels, to say nothing of men. I protest I could hardly do them justice when I pronounce that they had, amongst them, on their heads, an acre-and-a-half of shrubbery, besides slopes, grass-plats, tulip-beds, clumps of peonies, kitchen-gardens, and green houses. Mrs. Cotton and I had an infinite deal of entertainment out of them, 'though to our shame be it spoken, some of them were cousins. But I have no doubt that they held in great contempt our roseless heads and leafless necks."





CHAPTER V

“THE INFLEXIBLE CAPTIVE” — DR. JOHNSON’S
REBUFFS — GARRICK’S KINDNESS — SUCCESS
OF “PERCY”

AT least ten years before Hannah More knew the Garricks, and while she was still her sisters’ assistant in the Bristol seminary, she had sought to polish her style in translations and imitations from the Italian, French, and Spanish languages, by working up Metastasio’s opera of *Regulus* into an English drama. At Garrick’s suggestion she disinterred the manuscript and rewrote the play. It was acted in the summer of 1777, under the title of *The Inflexible Captive*, in the Bath theatre. Garrick wrote the prologue, a signal compliment for which the author of the drama thanks him gushingly, in a letter dated June 16th:

“I beg to return you my hearty thanks for your

goodness in sending me your delightful prologue. That you should think me not unworthy to possess so great a treasure, flatters more than my vanity. . . .

"I have read and re-read it with all the malice of a friend, and pronounce that I never read a sweeter or more beautiful thing. The first stanza is strikingly descriptive ; the second elegantly pathetic ; the image of the sun and shower very fine, and the third is highly poetical."

Miss Yonge reminds us, in writing of this period of Hannah More's life, that "it was an age of compliments that would now sound fulsome, if not absurd, and Hannah was a demonstrative person," — a gentle caution against harsh judgment we need to recollect in reading her letters to her new and distinguished friends. She excelled her teachers in the use of flowery compliment. Mrs. Piozzi — formerly Mrs. Thrale, Johnson's chief hostess, and a notable figure in the circle that held him as centre and sun — writes in her *Anecdotes of Samuel Johnson*, — "He once bade a very celebrated lady (Hannah More) who praised him with too much zeal, perhaps, or with too strong an emphasis (which always offended him), consider what her flattery was worth before she choked him with it." Miss Burney corroborates the story

by repeating Johnson's retort to Mrs. Thrale, who said of Fanny Burney, "We have told her what you said to Miss More, and I believe that makes her afraid." "Well!" growled the bearish idol — "and if she was to serve me as Miss More did I should say the same thing to her."

Johnson's parasite, Boswell, has his thrust at a woman he never liked :

"Talking of Miss Hannah More, a literary lady, Johnson said, 'I was obliged to speak to Miss Reynolds, to let her know that I desired she would not flatter me so much.' Somebody now observed, 'She flatters Garrick.' *Johnson* : 'She is in the right to flatter Garrick. She is in the right for two reasons : first, because she has the world with her, who have been praising Garrick these thirty years ; secondly, because she is rewarded for it by Garrick. Why should she flatter me? I can do nothing for her. Let her carry her praise to a better market.'"

And again in another chapter :

"Miss Hannah More was then just come to London from an obscure situation in the country. At Sir Joshua Reynolds's one evening, she met Dr. Johnson. She very soon began to pay her court to him in the most fulsome strain. 'Spare me, I beseech you — dear madam!' was his reply. She still laid it on. 'Pray, madam, let us have no more of this,' he rejoined. Not paying any attention to these warnings, she continued

still her eulogy. At length, provoked by this indelicate and vain obtrusion of compliment, he exclaimed, 'Dearest lady ! consider with yourself what your flattery is worth, before you bestow it so freely.' "

Of this outrage upon common decency Horace Walpole remarks sensibly : " Mrs. Thrale and all Johnson's disciples seem to have taken his brutal contradictions for *bon-mots*."

Some years had elapsed since the rebuffs were given, when the publication of the *Anecdotes* drew from Hannah the complaint that Mrs. Thrale had " needlessly printed some of Johnson's rough speeches." She had already begged Boswell to soften " his departed friend's asperities " in his projected book. Whereupon Boszy made the famous reply that he " would not make the tiger a cat to please anybody." Respect for the memory of him who had gone may have prompted Hannah's remonstrance. It is quite as likely that she winced at the thought of having the pepper-pot, of which she had been forced to partake once and again, uncovered to the public view. Not one of the " disciples " ever answered Johnson after his own manner. His pebbles, however rough, and

however hard they were thrown, were diamonds to them.

The son of a poor white living near Mount Vernon recalled in his old age, as one of the greatest honours of his life, a flogging he had received from George Washington. Johnson's kicks were accounted better than other people's half-pence by his noble toadies. Hannah chronicles none of the kicks in her most confidential letters, and makes the most of the crumbs of compliment, the crusts of condescension he tossed to her at his pleasure.

By contrast, the cordial kindness of her best friends, the Garricks, must have been trebly sweet. We can overlook the redundant adjectives in her letters to them, after reading of the home they made for her in their town and country houses, their pride in her talents, their tender solicitude for her welfare, the unfailing energy of their co-operation in her literary work. I select at random one instance of their parental kindness, which must have appealed to the heart of the motherly sister left in Bristol. It is written from Hannah's London lodgings.

“ Mrs. Garrick came to see me this morning, and wished me to go to the Adelphi [the Garricks’ home in town] which I declined, being so ill. She would have gone herself to fetch me a physician, and insisted upon sending me my dinner, which I refused. But at six this evening, when Garrick came to the Turk’s Head to dine, there accompanied him, in the coach, a minced chicken in a stew-pan — *hot* ! — a canister of her fine tea, and a pot of cream. Were there ever such people ! Tell it not in Epic, nor in Lyric, that the great Roscius rode with a stew-pan of minced meat with him in the coach for my dinner ! ”

Another incident illustrative of his watchful consideration of her comfort is better known. She writes from Farnborough Place, the magnificent country-seat of the Wilmots in Hampshire.

“ On Sunday evening I was a little alarmed. They were preparing for music (sacred music was the ostensible thing), but before I had time to feel uneasy, Garrick turned around and said—‘ Nine ! you are a Sunday woman. Retire to your room. I will recall you when the music is over.’ ”

The Inflexible Captive, introduced by the greatest of living English tragedians, was so well received by the fashionists of Bath that the author went on bravely with a more ambitious enterprise of a similar nature which Garrick had urged upon her.

In November, 1777, the tragedy of *Percy*

was brought out at Covent Garden Theatre, and forthwith became the decorous rage of play-going London. The scene was laid in England ; the time was that of the Crusaders. A lovers' quarrel ; the going of the desperate Percy "off to the wars again" ; a forced marriage between his distracted Dulcinea and Percy's enemy, Lord Douglas ; a false report of Percy's death ; his return to interview the wife of another ; a husband's jealousy ; a duel ; a suicide by drinking poison ordered by her husband to be taken in case he should fall ; the death of Percy in the duel, followed by Douglas's suicide,—form an *olla podrida* so unlike the mild panada of the *Search for Happiness* that we must accredit Garrick with the garlic, wine, and spices. Miss Yonge shows full appreciation of the fact in summing up the ingredients of the play, and ushering it upon the stage :

"Neither Hannah nor her friends seem to have had the slightest scruples as to entertaining a Christian audience with suicide after the high Roman fashion,—as, indeed, the tragic stage was in those days a conventional world, quite apart from any relation to the facts of history, manners, or real life, and with a code, as well as customs, of its own. Written under the superintendence of one who perfectly gauged the taste of the

contemporary public, and who, 'though retired, had an unlimited power of patronage, *Percy* had every advantage, and the actress, Kitty Clive, observed that 'Garrick's nursing had enabled the bantling to go alone in a month.'"

"Garrick thinks of nothing, talks of nothing, writes of nothing, but *Percy*," says Hannah, gratefully,—and, we must believe, sincerely. "The play seldom comes into my head unless it be mentioned. I am, at present, very tranquil about it."

The Garricks induced her, by friendly force, to take up her abode with them in the stirring times they anticipated, if she did not. She should have her "own comfortable room, with a good fire and with all the lozenges and all the wheys in the world," promised the affectionate hostess. Garrick wrote prologue and epilogue, and bargained that Hannah should pay him by a handsome supper and a bottle of claret. Dryden used to receive five guineas apiece for such things, but he, as a richer man, could afford better terms. Falling into his humour, Hannah offered a steak and a pot of porter, and after much and merry haggling, they supped at midnight upon toast and honey:

She breaks off the story of a supper at Sir Joshua's, a morning at the Chancellor's, and an evening with Lady Bathurst at Mrs. Boscawen's, to exclaim at the "dreadful news from America" (in 1777).

"We are a disgraced, undone nation ! What a sad time to bring out a play in ! when, if the country had the least spark of virtue remaining, not a creature would think of going to it."

This letter to her sister has an interesting postscript,—so graphic as to bring the scene in the theatre and the domestic after-act vividly before us :

"Mr. Garrick's study, Adelphi. Ten at night.

"He himself puts the pen into my hand, and bids me say that all is just as it should be. Nothing was ever more warmly received. I went with Mr. and Mrs. Garrick ; sat in Mr. Harris's [the manager's] box, in a snug, dark corner, and behaved very well, that is, very quietly. The prologue and epilogue were received with bursts of applause. So, indeed, was the whole,—as much beyond my expectation as my deserts. Mr. Garrick's kindness has been unceasing."

Mrs. Montague wrote to wish her "health to wear her bays with pleasure, and that she might ever be, as she had been, the

pride of her friends and the humiliation of her enemies." On the second night, "even the men shed tears in abundance" ; Dr. Percy, Bishop of Dromore, and author of the *Reliques*, etc., called in person to convey to Miss More the congratulations of the Duke of Northumberland and Earl Percy upon her great success. Each of these lords, father and son, "paid handsome sums for his ticket, as became the blood of the Percys, and in so genteel and respectful a manner that it was impossible for the nicest pride to take umbrage at it." Lord Lyttleton went every night for a week to see *Percy* ; Lady North had a stage box ; Mrs. Chapone was enraptured ; Lady Bathurst made no engagements for a fortnight that she might not miss a night of the new play ; Mrs. Boscawen sent a laurel wreath clasped by a valuable ring ; on the twelfth night, Covent Garden Theatre still "overflowed prodigiously, although the *School for Scandal* and their Majesties were at the other house." Mr. Home, whose tragedy of *Douglas* cost him his clergyman's gown and title, and won a King's favour and a pension, called to pay his respects, and was presented by Garrick in a graceful

speech, "making the Percy acquainted with the Douglas."

The venerable and venerated Mrs. Delany gave a dinner and an evening party to the author of *Percy*, the Duchess of Portland and a host of other titled friends of the beloved hostess attending the evening entertainment ; the Duchess of Beaufort asked for the honour of Miss More's acquaintance. The author's profits of the play from the theatre were six hundred pounds ; Cadell, the publisher, gave one hundred and fifty, "with conditional promises besides," for the right to issue it in book form.

"If I were a heroine of romance, and were writing to my confidante," she tells her sister, "I should tell you all the fine things that are said, but as I am a real, living Christian woman, I do not think it would be modest. I will only say, as Garrick does, that I have had so much flattery that I might, if I would, choke myself in my own pap."

It is curiously characteristic to find her turning from the cloying draught to commune with her own quiet heart on an evening when she had five invitations to dine abroad, "preferring the precious and rare luxury of solitude." "I am at this

moment as quiet as my heart could wish, and quietness is my definition of happiness," is a singular avowal from the successful and petted darling of the day. In her luxurious solitude her thoughts turned longingly to the dear group at home, for whose sake she penned pictures of the triumphs they would enjoy more than she.

"I think some of you might contrive to make a little jaunt, if it were only for one night, and see the bantling," she pleads. "Adieu, and some of you *come!*"

"Some" — we would fain believe all four of them — responded to the invitation and were present at the "twelfth night," to exult unselfishly in the "prodigious overflow" aforementioned, and to wonder, as one of them said afterward, to see Hannah "so mightily indifferent through it all." In a letter, written after their return to Bristol, Hannah quotes an extract from a communication just received by a friend from Mrs. Clive, rating *Percy* as "the best modern tragedy that has been produced in my time." "This is copied," says Hannah, "to give some pleasure to your sisterly vanity"; and dwells, more satisfiedly, upon

the "excessive kindness" of her friends during a slight illness through which she had just passed.

"The Garricks have been to see me every morning. The other day he told me he was in a violent hurry — that he had been to order his own and Mrs. Garrick's mourning—had just settled everything with the undertaker, and called for a moment to take a few hints for my epitaph. I told him he was too late as I had disposed of the employment a few days before, to Dr. Johnson, but as I thought he [Garrick] would praise me most, I should be glad to change. As to hints, I told him I had only one to give, which was to romance as much as he could, and to make the character as fine as possible."

The two men are brought together again in the last letter of the series covering the five months Hannah spent in London in 1777-78. Garrick was her escort to a party at Sir Joshua Reynolds's hospitable house, where were Gibbon the historian, Dr. Charles Burney, the father of Fanny (*Evelina*), the Bishop of St. Asaph, Boswell, Dr. Johnson, and other notable men, besides several distinguished women. "Scarce an expletive man or woman among men," writes Hannah, wittily. "Garrick put Johnson into such good spirits that I never knew him so entertaining, or more

instructive. He was as brilliant as himself, and as good humoured as any one else."

Her dream of meeting a Bishop, socially, had come to pass two years before, and was now quite an every-day affair. Bishops Newton and Porteous were among her fast friends. The latter was destined to take a prominent part in her affairs in succeeding years. Dr. Lowth, Bishop of London, invited her to pay him a visit at Fulham Palace, once the residence of the notorious Bonner, a visit commemorated by Hannah in a ballad descriptive of an imaginary call at his ancient haunts from the ghost of the persecutor. Bonner objurgates the decadence in churchly zeal on the part of the present incumbent, predicting naught but evil to Church and State :

" While this apostate Bishop seeks
The freedom of mankind.

" And who shall change his wayward heart,
His wilful spirit turn ?
For those his labours can't convert
His weakness will not burn."

The mild satire brought out a smarter reply from Mrs. Anna Lætitia Barbauld, author of the hymn beginning,

“ While Thee I seek, Protecting Power,”

and better known to our mothers than to ourselves, by her *Early Lessons for Children*, *Evenings at Home*, and *Devotional Pieces*. As the wife of a dissenting minister, she descried fewer changes in the Episcopal See than were evident to Jacob More's daughter, and sarcastically apologised, in the name of the Laodicean Bishops, for their lukewarmness, representing that

“ The spirit of the times restrains
The spirit of the Church.

“ Church maxims do not greatly vary,
Take it upon my honour ;
Place on the throne another Mary—
We'll find another Bonner !”

Hannah was not to be drawn into a polemic encounter of wits. Staunch churchwoman though she was, she was so much at one with what were spoken of as “the Evangelicals,” that her spiritual nature was athirst through all the giddy round of worldly gayeties, the pomp and circumstance of her personal successes.

In the five months of her sojourn in London, she read the Epistles through three times, and divers uninspired devotional works, also *West on the Resurrection*, a

book which was engaging the attention of the religious world. "In my poor judgment, a most excellent thing," she notes, in a diary letter.

She carried back with her to Bristol and comparative quiet the plan of a domestic drama, to be called, *The Fatal Falsehood*, and set herself assiduously to work upon it.





CHAPTER VI

GARRICK'S DEATH AND FUNERAL—"THE FATAL FALSEHOOD" WRITTEN AND ACTED — LIFE WITH MRS. GARRICK AT HAMPTON

GARRICK had approved the scheme and action of *The Fatal Falsehood*. Four acts of it were read and revised by him. He was never to see the fifth. On January 20, 1779, a special messenger was despatched to Bristol with the news of his death and an earnest request from Mrs. Garrick that Miss More would lose no time in coming to her.

Hannah was ill in her bed when the summons came. She arose at once, made ready, and set off to London without the delay of an hour. Preparations for a state funeral were going on when she reached the house in which the widow was staying.

I copy a portion of a long letter from Hannah to her home :

“She ran into my arms and we both remained silent for some minutes. At last she whispered, ‘I have this moment embraced his coffin, and you come next.’”

After going into the details of Garrick’s last and fearfully brief illness, the sympathising friend continues :

“I paid a melancholy visit to his coffin yesterday, where I found room for meditation, ’till the mind ‘burst with thinking.’ His new house is not so pleasant as Hampton, nor so splendid as the Adelphi, but it is commodious enough for all the wants of its inhabitant. And, besides, it is so quiet that he will never be disturbed ’till the eternal morning, and never ’till then will a sweeter voice be heard. May he then find mercy ! They are preparing to hang the house with black, for he is to lie in state until Monday. I dislike this pageantry, and cannot help thinking that the disembodied spirit must look with contempt upon the farce that is played over its miserable relics. But a splendid funeral could not be avoided, as he is to be laid in the Abbey with such illustrious dust, and so many are desirous of testifying their respect by attending.

“I can never cease to remember with affection and gratitude, so warm, steady, and disinterested a friend ; and I can most truly bear this testimony to his memory, that I never witnessed in any family more decorum, propriety and regularity, than in his ;— where I never saw a card, or ever met (except in one instance) a person of his

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own profession at his table, of which Mrs. Garrick, by her elegance of taste, her correctness of manners, and very original turn of humour, was the brightest ornament."

The state funeral was an imposing ceremonial. Ten peers of the realm were the great tragedian's pall-bearers; Richard Brinsley Sheridan was chief mourner. Hannah breaks off suddenly in a graphic description of the scene with—"Then the body (alas ! whose body ?) "

It is like a passionate sob and an impetuous rush of tears blinding the eyes to what was passing before them.

In sad composure she resumes the narrative.

The burial service was read by the Bishop of London amid silence so impressive that every syllable was audible in the vast spaces of the magnificent Cathedral.

"And this is all of Garrick !" Hannah breaks forth, again. "So passes away the fashion of this world !"

The sad, bitter wonder of the mourner, for whom the face of life and nature has changed under the gloom of one awful cloud, sounds in the next sentence :

"And the very night he was buried, the play-houses were as full, and the Pantheon was as crowded as if no

such thing had happened ; nay, the very mourners of the day partook of the revelries of the night,—the same night too !”

At Mrs. Garrick’s solicitation Hannah went back with her to the desolated home, Hampton, “ this sweet and once cheerful place,” as Hannah calls it. The dead master’s dog ran out eagerly, hoping to greet him ; the perfect weather, the budding verdure, although the spring was not yet come — “ all would appear as beautiful as it used to be,” sighs the writer, “ could we pluck from the memory a rooted sorrow.”

Mrs. Garrick bore the terrible blow like the true Christian woman she was, meeting friends and acquaintances with calm resignation, which was almost serene and altogether heroic.

“ When I expressed my surprise at her self-command she answered : “ Groans and complaints are very well for those who are to mourn but for a little while, but a sorrow that is to last for life will not be violent or romantic.’ ”

Consistently with her unselfish resolve not to darken other lives by her grief, she insisted that Miss More should not share her seclusion when they returned to the London house, but receive and return the

visits of her many friends. With no inclination for gay society, the guest preferred the quiet routine of which she writes to her sisters :

“ My way of life is very different from what it used to be. You must not, therefore, expect much entertainment from my letters, for, as in the annals of states, so in the lives of individuals, those periods are often the safest and best which make the poorest figure.

“ After breakfast I go to my own apartment for several hours, where I read, write, and work, very seldom letting anybody in, though I have a separate room for visitors, but I almost look upon a morning visit as an immorality. At four we dine. At six we have coffee ; at eight, tea, when we have, sometimes, a dowager of quality. At ten we have salad and fruits. Each has her book, which we read without any restraint, as if we were alone, without apologies, or speech-making.”

The tranquil twilight of this existence was broken in upon by Mr. Harris, the theatrical manager who had brought out *Percy*. Learning that *The Fatal Falsehood* was ready for the stage, he importuned Miss More to allow him to give it to the public. Summer and the close of the fashionable season were rapidly approaching ; several of the actors who had contributed to the success of *Percy* were out of town, and the author of the new

play was not merely "mighty indifferent" about what became of it, but heartily disinclined to a repetition of her theatrical experiences. The manager was a man of resources and resolution. In May he had wrung from her a reluctant consent to the production of the new play.

The author was conveniently indisposed on the first night. One of her sisters went to the theatre as her proxy, and we are dependent upon her for the report of the manner of its reception :

"The applause was as great as her most sanguine friends could wish. When Hull came forward to ask permission to perform it again, they gave leave by three loud shouts, and by many huzzaings. I will tell you a little anecdote. A lady, observing to one of her maid-servants when she came in from the play, that her eyes looked red, as if she had been crying, the girl, by way of apology said,— ' Well, ma'am, if I did, it was no harm. A great many respectable people cried too ! '

"*Percy*, I hear, is translated into German, and has been performed at Vienna with great success."

Despite the lateness of the season, the success of *The Fatal Falsehood* was so pronounced that Cadell asked for the book-rights, and Hannah prepared the play for publication in this form. In the course of the negotiation, the publisher made the

jocose remark to which some biographers attribute Miss More's refusal ever to write again for the stage :

“You are too good a Christian to be a dramatic author.”

It is far more probable that what little inclination she had for this line of composition, and her enjoyment in dramatic triumphs, were effectually dispelled by Garrick's death. All the enthusiasm she had felt in the success of *Percy* was inspired by his keen interest in the undertaking. She had been carried forward by the rush of his energy ; he had fairly talked her into love for the offspring of her brain. With his going, departed her ambition to earn histrionic laurels. She refused to go to the theatre upon any of the few nights when *The Fatal Falsehood* was played, and, so far as we know, never entered a theatre again. The lesson of “Vanity of Vanities” had been pressed too sharply home to be forgotten.

Within a few weeks after the performance of the last play she was ever to write she returned to Bristol, remaining there until late in the year (1779). Then Mrs. Garrick recalled her insistently, and for the

next two years Miss More's home was virtually with her widowed friend.

"We never see a human face but each other's," Hannah wrote to her sister the middle of January, 1780. "'Though in such deep retirement I am never dull, because I am not reduced to the fatigue of entertaining dunces, or of being obliged to listen to them. We dress like a couple of Scaramouches, dispute like a couple of Jesuits, eat like a couple of aldermen, walk like a couple of porters, and read as much as any two doctors of either university."

Mrs. Garrick—*née* Eva Maria Veigel—was an Austrian dancer, beautiful and courted by royalty, yet blameless in character and deportment, when Garrick first met her. The love-match was singularly happy, and although the wife remained in the communion of the Roman Catholic Church, the difference in religious belief appeared to be no drawback to their domestic felicity, or to discount her worth as a friend in the sight of his English associates.

Gossipy and often ill-natured Boswell says that Mrs. Garrick called Hannah More her "domestic chaplain," presumably on account of the guest's sincere interest in the church-going habits and moral status of the servants of the quiet household. It

speaks untold things for the gentle toleration of her whom nine-tenths of English-reading people persist in regarding as a pietist of the strictest sect, that Mrs. Garrick's alien faith interposed no barrier to their mutual attachment. The prolonged and absolute seclusion of Hampton would have tested to the utmost friendship based upon anything except thorough harmony of opinions and tastes. When the conventional twelvemonth of mourning was over, Hannah spoke regretfully of the projected removal to London.

"We have been very busy sending around Mrs. Garrick's cards of thanks," she mentions, incidentally. "I suppose they include seven hundred people, six hundred of whom I dare say she will hardly ever let in again.

"We regret leaving a new cow and a young calf. The birds that we feed three times a day at the window are to be left on board wages; a small loaf is to be brought to them every morning."

She openly regretted Hampton in the first letter sent to Bristol after they were installed in the London house. She had been peremptorily summoned to rejoin "the old set—the Johnsons, the Burneys, the Chapones, the Thrales, the Smelts, the Pepyses, the Ramsays, and so on, *ad infinitum*"—at the house of Mrs. Ord, a leader of

the clique. Mrs. Garrick presented a new head-dress and put it upon her friend with her own hands :

“ So I was quite sure of being smart. But how short-lived is all human joy ! and see what it is to live in the country ! When I came into the drawing-rooms I found them full of company—every human creature in deep mourning, and I—poor I ! all gorgeous in *scarlet* ! I never recollected that the mourning for some foreign Wilhelmina Jacqueline was not over. However, I got over it as well as I could, made an apology, lamented the ignorance in which I had lately lived, and I hope this false step of mine will be buried in oblivion.”

Delightful Mrs. Delany—better known to us than any other private gentlewoman of her generation, from the reading of her *Diary, Letters, and Life*, published a dozen years or so ago—invited Miss More repeatedly to her select and unparallelled parties of eight. At these the pleasant acquaintance already formed with Horace Walpole ripened into friendship that was to endure for the rest of his life. She introduced him by letter to her home coterie as “ my friend, Horace Walpole, son to the minister of that name.” He soon fastened upon her the affectionate sobriquet of “ Saint Hannah,” and took mischievous

pleasure in using it in conversation and correspondence.

At Mrs. Delany's she met, also, Lady Mary Wortley Montagu, brilliant, eccentric, and so dashing as to jar upon Saint Hannah's sense of propriety. In cataloguing among her distinguished new acquaintances the Countess of Bute, she writes her down as "wife to the late First Minister, and daughter (but of a very superior character) to Lady Mary Wortley Montagu."

Conversation-parties at Mrs. Boscawen's, where card-tables in the outer drawing-room "weeded the company of some of the great, and all the dull," were recorded zestfully. The popular author spent a "very agreeable day" at Wimbledon Park, then in the occupancy of the Bishop of St. Asaph, and enjoyed chiefly turning over the library collected by the Duchess of Marlborough, whom Hannah calls, irreverently and parenthetically, "old Sarah." Tea with Bishop Newton; a crush at Mrs. Ord's, where she heard from Johnson of the King's suggestion, seconded by Miss More, that Edmund Spenser should be included in the *Lives of the Poets*; sitting for her portrait to Miss Reynolds, with Johnson lolling in an easy-chair

near her, and saying the best things he could think of “to ensure a pleasing expression,”—were the recreation of days she made studious in the heart of London and in the thick of “the season.” At one of Mrs. Boscawen’s famous dinner-parties she met Béranger—“all chivalry and blank verse and anecdote.” With all her liking for the Bard of Twickenham, Hannah could not resist the temptation of quoting his eulogium upon Lord Cobham, and contrasting it with the facts attending the peer’s demise.

I will let her tell the story :

“—Lord Cobham—of whom Pope asserts, you know, that he would

‘ Feel the ruling passion strong in death,’
and that

‘ Save my country, Heaven !’

would be his last words. But what shows that Pope was not so good a prophet as poet was that in his [Cobham’s] last moments, not being able to carry a glass of jelly to his mouth, he was in such a passion, feeling his own weakness, that he threw glass, jelly and all, into Lady Chatham’s face and expired.”

Hampton, “very clean, very green, very beautiful, and very melancholy,” with its



HANNAH MORE, AT THE AGE OF SEVENTY

“long, drear calm of fixed repose,” was yet a change that “suited her mightily after the hurry of London.” With the passing of the effervescent spirits of youth, the love for higher and nobler pursuits than the follies of the day strengthened. She read much, filling her correspondence with literary friends with dissertations upon Gray, Gibbon, *The Lusiad*, Walpole’s pamphlet upon the Chattertonian controversy, Johnson’s *Life of Addison*, and Madan’s treatise upon polygamy—*Thelyphthora*.

Of this last peculiar production she says, severely :

“There never was such a strange book under such a mask of holiness. I have as great an antipathy to some of the gospel according to Mr. Madan, as ever an infidel had to the Gospel according to St. Matthew. I believe the Holy Scriptures were never before made the cover, nay the vehicle, of so much indecency.”

The readers of William Cowper’s *Life* will recognise in the obnoxious author the kinsman, Martin Madan, whose extraordinary defence of polygamy incited the gentle poet to write *Anti-Thelyphthora*, afterwards regretted as “a mistake, if not a folly.”

Miss More was, with the rest of the English world, intensely interested in the trial of Lord George Gordon, the ruling spirit of the "No Popery" riots, and shows sterling sense in her comment upon the result :

"I am glad he is acquitted, for it disappoints the party, and uncanonises the martyr."

Her picture of general society as she saw it with the pure, grave eyes through which a chastened spirit looked on life—although penned in 1782—condenses the views formed in the two years of her residence with the widow of her dead friend and second father.

"On Monday I was at a very great assembly at the Bishop of St. Asaph's. Conceive to yourself one hundred and fifty, or two hundred people met together, dressed in the extremity of the fashion ; painted as red as bacchanals ; poisoning the air with perfumes ; treading on each other's gowns ; making the crowd they blame ; not one in ten able to get a chair ; protesting they are engaged to ten other places, and lamenting the fatigue they are not obliged to endure ; ten or a dozen card-tables, crammed with dowagers of quality, grave ecclesiastics and yellow admirals ;—and you have an idea of an ASSEMBLY.

"I never go to these things when I can possibly avoid it, and, while there, stay as few minutes as I can."



CHAPTER VII

“SACRED DRAMAS” — VISIT TO OXFORD — TOP
WAVE OF POPULARITY — DEATH OF MISS
MORE’S FATHER — FAMILY RELATIONS — “THE
BAS BLEU”

THE sense of solemn responsibility to God and to her kind for the matter and manner of her daily living which had been steadily growing upon Miss More for many months, is indirectly, but significantly, expressed in her reference to the publication of a work committed to Cadell late in the year 1781.

“I actually feel very awkward about this new book,” she confides to her faithful sister. “Strangers who read it will, I am afraid, think I am ‘good,’ and I would not appear better than I am, which is certainly the case with all who do not act as seriously as they write. I think sometimes of what Prior makes Solomon say of himself in his fallen estate;—‘They brought my proverbs to confute my life.’”

She evidently expressed the same dread to Mrs. Boscawen, who, in acknowledging the receipt of an advance copy of the work in question, bids Hannah read Matthew v., 15 :

“ Neither do men light a candle and put it under a bushel, but on a candlestick, and it giveth light unto all who are in the house.”

“ When they read your *Dramas*, they ‘ will think you good ? ’ ” pursues the friendly critic. “ I am not ‘ afraid ’ so. I *hope* so ! else I am sure they must think you a hypocrite. . . . I never yet suspected that any one could ‘ bring your proverbs to confute your life. ’ ”

The candle just lighted and put upon a goodly candlestick by Cadell was *Sacred Dramas and A Poem on Sensibility*. The subjects of the *Dramas* were “ The Finding of Moses,” “ The Slaying of Goliath of Gath,” “ Belshazzar’s Feast,” and “ Hezekiah’s Meditations during his Sickness,” founded upon 2 Kings xx., 1–11. They were intended for private reading, not for the stage, and, in the dearth of Sunday literature prevalent at that time, they served their end well. Nineteen editions ran through the press before the popular call

for the book slackened. The *Bas Bleu* clique praised it to the skies: orthodox Jonas Hanway, author of the *Book of Nature*, and a veritable Mr. Valiant-for-Truth,

“sat down to read them [*the Dramas*] with fear and trembling, as he had persuaded himself it was taking an undue liberty with the Scriptures, but he had no sooner finished them than he ran off to the bookseller, bought three or four, and went to a great boarding-school where he had some little friends. He gave the governess the book, and told her it was part of her duty to see that all her girls studied it thoroughly.”

Bishop Lowth “liked the whole book more than he could say,” and the Bishop of Chester gave to the author what she honestly declared to be “the praise best worth having,” when he assured her that her work “would do a vast deal of good.” Worthy Queen Charlotte had the *Dramas* read aloud to her by one of her ladies-in-waiting (a slavish post of honour afterwards occupied by Fanny Burney), and charged Miss Hamilton, an acquaintance of Miss More, to convey to that lady “all manner of handsome and flattering messages, desiring her, above all things, to pursue the same path, and to go on by writing a sacred drama upon the history of Joseph.”

In fine, the ball of popular favour was again at the author's feet ; fresh laurels were to be had for the gathering. Perhaps her head may have been a trifle light in the gale of incense that "boomed" *Percy*, two years ago. It was as steady now as her heart, as cool as her judgment of her own abilities and shortcomings. She passes coolly from mention of the Bishop's plaudits to discourse at greater length upon the books she is reading. She has finished six volumes of *Jortin's Sermons* — "elegant, but cold, and very low in doctrine." *Cardiphonia*, by our old friend and Cowper's spiritual guide, John Newton, suits her better, "having in it much vital religion, and much of the experience of a good Christian." Gibbon's *History of the Lower Empire*, "in three very thick quartos, a fine, but insidious narrative of a dull period," has been read aloud by herself to Mrs. Garrick every day from dinner until tea, and she treats her sisterly correspondent to a critique of it which is terse and masterly. Passing from the topic, she says :

"However, I am now plunging into other studies than the disputes of Arius and his antagonists, with which my head

has been filled, and am pleasantly engaged to spend the evening with Eneas at Evander's rustic banquet."

At the same time she is reading Bishop Lowth's *Isaiah*, "a work of great labour and erudition, but better calculated for scholars than plain Christians." She considers his *De Sacra Poesi* "a treasure." A translation of *A Lady of Quality's Advice to her Children* commends itself to her by the author's knowledge of the human heart and the emptiness of the world. She has also been "running over" the posthumous *Letters of Shenstone*, dining with the Lord Chancellor at Apsley House, with the patriots at Bishop Shipley's, with the Bishops of Durham and of Chester, breakfasting with Lord Monboddo at Sir Charles Middleton's, and spending whole happy days with Mrs. Delany, now eighty-two years old and blind, yet the object of Hannah's veneration and almost envy.

"Such an excellent mind, so cultivated, such a tranquil, grateful spirit, such a composed piety!"

She encloses in a home letter a copy of verses slipped into her hand at the meeting of the "Oyster Club, consisting of about

half-a-dozen learnèd men and two or three ladies." It was scribbled under the table by Rev. Dr. Horne, Dean of Canterbury and author of a *Commentary upon the Psalms, Letters on Infidelity*, etc. The impromptu doggerel was superscribed :

"To Bamber Gascoigne, Esq., on his having accidentally overturned a cruets of vinegar and oil upon a gauze apron of Miss Hannah More's,—alluding to the good temper with which she laughed off the accident.

" Like Hannibal, why dost thou come,
With vinegar prepared,
As if the gentle Hannah's heart
Like Alpine rocks were hard ?

" All sharp and poignant as thou art,
The acid meets a foil ;
Obedient still to Nature's law,
Superior floats the oil."

The Carthaginian warrior bore a part in another compliment received by the popular author at this date. Johnson was her neighbour at a Bishop's dinner-party, and Hannah was privately importuned by the host to show the Great Bear off to advantage to some strangers present. She succeeded so well that he took her hand "in

the middle of dinner," but presumably when he was well-gorged, and spouted passages from Rowe's *Fair Penitent* and other dramas and poems.

"One of the company happened to say a word about poetry.

"Hush ! hush !" said he. "It is dangerous to say a word about poetry before her. It is talking of the art of war before Hannibal !"

Hannah More was a spinster of thirty-seven, but no prude, for she relates in this connection and without a suspicion of a blush, that Johnson "continued his jokes, and lamented that I had not married Chatterton, that posterity might have seen a propagation of poets."

So much for the table-talk of literati of both sexes in the reign of moral George the Third and his exemplary consort.

In this year of 1782 the Academy of Arts, Science, and Belles Lettres at Rouen had elected Miss More to membership. She corresponded with this organisation in French until communication between the two nations of England and France was interrupted by the Revolution.

Notwithstanding the nineteen editions of

the *Sacred Dramas*, the author was not quite satisfied at their reception by the public she had hoped to interest.

“The word ‘Sacred’ in the title is a damper to the *Dramas*. It is tying a millstone about the neck of *Sensibility* which will drown them both together.”

Leaving Mrs. Garrick in June (1782) for her Bristol home, she spent a few days *en route* with her friends, Dr. and Mrs. Kennicott, in Oxford. Dr. Benjamin Kennicott was one of the most learned biblical scholars in the United Kingdom, and Keeper of the Radcliffe Library. He had just completed his monumental work, the fruit of many years’ labor, the *Vetus Testamentum Hebraicum cum Variis Lectionibus*, and, as we learn from Miss More’s correspondence, was more than willing to seek relaxation in social converse with his sprightly visitor. In a mock menagerie set up in the Kennicott House, the host was an elephant, his wife a dromedary, Miss Adams, daughter of the Master of Pembroke, an antelope, Miss More, a rhinoceros.

The principal incident of this visit was the expedition to Pembroke College with Johnson as cicerone. Pembroke was his

Alma Mater, and he would let no one show it to Miss More but himself. He conducted her proudly from room to room, pointing out the chambers formerly occupied by the poets who had been of his college.

“ ‘ This was my room,—this, Shenstone’s, etc., etc. In short, we were in a nest of singing birds. Here we walked, there we played at cricket.’ When we came into the common room, we spied a fine large print of Johnson, framed and hung up that very morning, with this motto—

**‘ And is not Johnson ours, himself a
host ? ’**

Under which stared you in the face—

‘ From Miss More’s “ Sensibility.” ’

“ This little incident amused us, but alas ! Johnson looks very ill indeed—spiritless and wan. However, he made an effort to be cheerful and I exerted myself to make him so.”

She had a “delectable visit” at the Bishop of Llandaff’s, near Wallingford, and in describing it to her sister alludes to the “inundation of company at the Kennicotts’.” As she writes there are “in the next room three Canons, three Heads, three ladies, one student, and one Professor.”

And so, floated upon the top wave of popularity, as the favoured guest in every company in which she found herself, she drifted back, as usual, for the summer months to Bristol. Her sisters were still teaching, the well-conducted seminary having taken the form of a training-school for governesses, some of whom, as Sally amused Hannah and Mrs. Garrick by relating, needed to be taught to spell and read. Long years of faithful service in their chosen profession had brought money, with reputation, to the faithful quartette. They were already revolving the scheme, dear to Hannah's heart, of retiring to a country cottage, "too low for a clock"—as the dreamer had pictured it in the days when going to London, visits to publishers and bishops, were the staple of her visions. The sisters had kept in touch with the brilliant member of the band that was always one in heart. Her triumphs were sweeter to them than to her more sophisticated spirit. They would have been dust and ashes between her teeth had she not shared them with the rest.

Several years before this, the needs of the enlarging seminary had compelled the

Misses More to build a more commodious house in Park Street, Bristol. It is still standing and the main building is occupied by a Roman Catholic bookseller. In the rear of the house is the "Hannah More Hall." Shortly afterwards, the daughters built a pleasant home for their parents at what was known as Stony Hill, Bristol.

Curious, sentimental, and superficial readers of Hannah More's life and letters have marvelled at the absence of all reference to her father and mother in the hundreds of epistles which went from London, Hampton, Oxford, Bath, and other of her temporary abodes to the Bristol home-circle. Several biographers have lamented openly that we hear so little of the exemplary couple whose judicious education of their girls had produced such notable results. Mr. Jacob More was a ripe scholar, a good man, an affectionate parent. His wife was a woman of more than ordinary intelligence, as we have seen, and her method of securing for all her brood the advantages of the French school to which she could afford to send but one, showed her to be shrewd and far-sighted, and to possess much executive ability.

Careful comparison of Hannah's diary-letters reveal wide gaps between the dates which recall to mind the fact that half of her year was spent in the bosom of her family. We have no means of knowing what proportion of the summer months was devoted to filial cares. That her relations with her father remained affectionate to the last we shall show presently. It must be observed, furthermore, that everything pertaining to the domestic life of the Bristol homestead was carefully excised from the sisterly correspondence before it was committed to the compiler. It would have been far more satisfactory to us had Hannah's heart-talks remained just as she sent them ; if we had had more of the woman, and perhaps less of the courted author, the student, the philosopher, and the clever annalist of other clever people's sayings and doings.

The Bristol sojourn of this year was especially pleasant, if we may judge from the chance references to it which have escaped the pruning-shears of decorous editing. Mrs. Montagu — whose Portland Square mansion was the headquarters of the *Bas Bleu*, and whose fame as a *littérateuse* and

leader of fashion has been revived in our era by Dr. Doran's *Lady of the Last Century*—ran down to Bristol for the express purpose of visiting her friend in her own home, and "talked of nothing else" for days afterward. While there she was introduced to the Mores' great friend, Dr. (or Sir) James Stonehouse, and wrote from Bath to express the gratification she had had in reading some of his works. The Bristol sisters, released by the summer vacation from the bondage of school routine, made picnics and other outdoor excursions in Hannah's honour, the five taking carriage, or walking to some one of the familiar haunts of Lang Syne, carrying a basket of provisions and spending the whole day in the open air. Hannah, we may surmise, was, as of old, the chief story-teller. The length of her tri-weekly letters to her best-belovèd, and the minuteness of detail with which she tried to make them know the celebrities she met ; to enter in imagination the new world she had found—are amazing in one whose every hour in town was mortgaged. More conclusive testimony to the depth and steadfastness of her love for her sisters could not be desired. They

were partners in her literary ambitions as they were to become, before long, in her benevolent labours. In every joy and every trial the beautiful fivefold cord held fast.

Winter was late in coming that year, and although Mrs. Garrick was urgent in her petitions for the return of her domestic chaplain, business adviser, and counsellor-general, Hannah lingered in Bristol until December. She must have been glad of this when, in the first week of the new year (1783), she had a letter from her sister Sarah announcing the sudden death of her father.

Miss Yonge mentions a copy of original verses he sent to Hannah, "long after he was eighty years old." As he was the father of five children in 1747, the probability is that he was nearer ninety than eighty at his death. With the shock still upon her, Hannah wrote to Patty More :

"It was so unusual for me to receive a letter two days following, that, when Sally's came on Wednesday, I had so strong a presentiment of its contents that I did not open it for a long time, but laid it down very deliberately, and went and did several things which I thought too well I should not be able to do after I had read it. Yet, notwithstanding all this preparation, I was just as

much shocked at reading it, as if I had expected nothing like it. I could not get quite through it for many hours after. And yet there is no cause for grief, but much for joy, much cause to be thankful. And I am very thankful that he was spared to us so long—that he was removed when life began to grow a burden to himself—that he did not survive his faculties—that he was not confined to the miseries of a sick-bed—and, above all, that his life was so exemplary, and his death so easy.

“I wish I had seen him ! Yet that is a vain regret. I hope he did not inquire after me, or miss me. Mrs. Garrick was very much affected, as my father was a very great favourite of hers.”

The last sentence is strongly corroborative of what I said awhile ago of the elisions (editorial) in Hannah More's home correspondence. There is no mention in any other letter of Mrs. Garrick's acquaintance-ship with Mr. More. Yet that she knew and admired him as a man, and valued him as a friend, we have here direct proof. Of the genuineness of Hannah's affliction we have more evidence in another note :

“Hampton, Jan. 28, 1783.

“Since my dear father's death I have never yet had resolution to go out of doors, so much as to walk around the garden, in almost three weeks ; but, as the day is fine, I intend to go out when I have finished this scrawl.”

In March, Mrs. Garrick and her friend removed to London. There, although she declined to appear in large assemblies, Miss More's friends rallied in force about her. Horace Walpole "wrangled with her about poets, he, abusing all her favourites, and she, his"; Hoole sent her the preface to his translation of *Ariosto*, a compliment upon which she comments, dryly, as an expensive present, since she could not do less now than subscribe for the work, "and a guinea and a half for a translation of a work is *dearish*." She visited Dr. Johnson, who was still an invalid, but very "interesting and all kindness" to her. Lord Bathurst singled her out after a dinner at Apsley House and entertained her by the hour with anecdotes of his godfather, Lord Bolingbroke, of Pope, and others,— "all very important and full of interest." The letter in which these items are jotted down concludes with a weary-hearted sigh: "This round will not last long. I begin to calculate that there is little more than a clear month between this and June."

The editorial pruner overlooked two brief, eloquent sentences in a letter penned May 5th :

“Is it not very melancholy when you go to see our solitary mother? I endeavour to think of it as little as I can, but in spite of my endeavours it mixes with all my thoughts.”

Why the aged mother of five dutiful daughters should have been solitary in her widowhood is a mystery which Mr. Roberts and other chroniclers who lived nearer the times of Mary, Elizabeth, Sarah, Hannah, and Martha More do not seem to have thought it worth their while to clear up. That the melancholy solitude was not the fault of any one of her children we must believe when we read of their devotion to one another and their ready response to sorrow and need in whatever form these confronted them.

Hannah was summoned from her summing with her sisters to witness the death of Dr. Kennicott, and to support his wife through the trying scenes accompanying it. Her peculiarly sympathetic nature was joined to self-control and practical activity in every exigency that made her invaluable in the house of mourning.

“I shall stay while I have any chance of being useful to the afflicted widow,” she wrote to her sister.

“What substantial comfort and satisfaction must not the testimony which our departed friend was enabled to bear to the truth of the Holy Scriptures afford to those who lean upon them as the only anchor of the soul ! When Dr. K. had an audience of the King to present his work, His Majesty asked him,— ‘What, upon the whole, had been the result of his laborious and learned investigation ?’ To which he replied that he ‘had found some grammatical errors, and many variations, in the different texts, but not one which, in the smallest degree, affected any article of faith or practice.’ ”

In another letter Hannah gives us an idea of the nature and extent of her “usefulness to the afflicted widow” :

“We are vastly busy packing, selling, writing, etc., and perhaps it is good for poor Mrs. Kennicott that she is not allowed a quiet enjoyment of her grief.”

Miss More had had an illness of her own earlier in the summer, for she writes in July to William W. Pepys, Esq., one of her most valued literary friends :

“I have been filling up the vacant hours of my convalescence in scribbling a parcel of idle verses,” which she begs him to “read critically with all the malice of a friend. Do not make the least scruple of striking out any improper, or singularly flimsy, couplet.”

Her critic responded that he had read the poem over twenty times, and “really thought it a composition of first-rate merit of its kind.”

Thus was born the poem, *The Bas Bleu*, in which the members of the accomplished coterie in which Mrs. Montagu and Mrs. Vesey were ruling spirits, were described, and contrasted favourably with the *Salon Bleu* of the Hotel Rambouillet :

“ Where point and turn and equivoque
Distorted every word they spoke ;
All so intolerably bright
Plain common-sense was put to flight ;
Each speaker so ingenious ever,
'T was tiresome to be so clever.”

The members of the English clique received, as was the fashion of the day, Latin names ; the stingless satire was copied by Mrs. Pepys, “that the handwriting might not betray the authorship,” and sent by post, anonymously, to Mrs. Vesey. Lælius, Roscius, Lentulus, Atticus & Company, recognising themselves under their Latin togas, were flattered and charmed, begged for confidential copies of the verses, passed them on to their friends, still confidentially, until everybody was

quoting it, and the authorship ceased to be a secret.

Dr. Johnson wrote to Mrs. Thrale that the poem now "wandering about in manuscript" was in his opinion "a great performance." To the author's face he said that "there was no name in poetry that might not be glad to own it." When the blushing recipient of the compliment told him that she was "delighted at his approbation," he answered quite characteristically :

"And so you may be, for I give you the opinion of a man who does not praise easily."

Miss Yonge sums up the verdict that must be rendered by those so far removed by time from the personal interests of that epoch in English literature as to be unable to appreciate what were then adjudged to be the best points of the performance :

"On the whole, however, modern taste prefers the letter sent out by Miss More to Mrs. Pepys with a pair of stockings knitted for one of the children—a cleverer thing in its way than *The Bas Bleu*."

The letter, playful, graceful, and ingenious, is headed, *The Bas Blanc*.

“The subject,” she says, “is simple, but it has a beginning, middle and end. The exordium is the natural introduction by which you are let into the whole work. The middle, I trust, is free from any unnatural tumor or inflation, and the end from any disproportionate littleness. I have avoided bringing about the catastrophe too suddenly, as I know that would hurt him at whose feet I lay it.”

And so on through four pages of letter-paper, concluding with the expectation that “it will long survive all my other productions.” Therefore—“I am desirous to place it in the Pepysian collection.”

The stockings, however tender and tattered, would fetch their weight in gold now.

The Bas Bleu appeared in print in 1786, and was bound in the same volume with a poem entitled *Florio*, depicting the character and ways of a man about town. The book was dedicated to Horace Walpole. A “chorus of panegyric” greeted the new applicant for popular favour; Horace Walpole disclaimed the praises lavished upon him in the dedication, but said a “thousand diverting things about *Florio*,” and the author was perhaps the only person in the mutual admiration society who appraised the

production justly, and weighed aright the value of the encomiums it received.

Her growing weariness with what she had once fancied would fill and flush her measure of content is apparent in many a passage in letters as full as ever of incidents that would entertain the toiling sisterhood in Bristol. In 1787, she turned an important leaf in the Higher Life by becoming acquainted with William Wilberforce and John Newton. The bill for the abolition of the African slave-trade was, through the exertions of Wilberforce, brought before Parliament in 1787, and marked the beginning of a struggle he was to maintain with unflinching courage for twenty years, a hard-won victory crowning his efforts in 1807. William Cowper believed it near at hand when he set his lance in rest and charged upon the leaders in the abhorrent traffic. Hannah More threw energy and talent into the cause. The ring of genuine feeling sounds through lines which, in smoothness of versification, remind us of Pope at his best :

“ Who makes the sum of human blessings less,
Or sinks the stock of general happiness,
Though erring fame may grace, though false renown

His life may blazon, or his memory crown,
Yet the last Audit shall reverse the cause,
And God shall vindicate His broken laws.”

A sentence catches my eye as I turn the pages of the *Letters*, and brings a gleam of cynical amusement to the lips :

“I was in the very joy of my heart on seeing the other day in the papers that our charming Miss Burney has got an establishment so near the Queen. How I love the Queen for having so wisely chosen!”

Poor “Evelina”—forbidden to read, except at her royal mistress’s behest; the fag of a vulgar German “mother of the maids”; writing by stealth the *Diary* that opens the windows of her prison-house to us; broken in health and degraded in spirit by confinement and the never-ending routine of labours which should have devolved upon an unlettered Abigail—could have disabused her fellow-craftswoman’s mind of the illusion, lowered her reverent affection for the “sweet queen”—as Macaulay sneeringly calls the dull taskmistress,—and dispelled any lurking envy that might have entered generous Hannah’s mind at the story of “little Burney’s” elevation.

While fortunate Fanny was combing the

hair and lacing the bodice of her "sweet queen," catching monthly glimpses of her father and sisters at court receptions, and spending every evening in playing cards with snuffy, ill-tempered Mrs. Schwellenborg, Hannah was concluding the purchase of Cowslip Green, and setting up herself, one sister, and a limited number of household gods therein.

The "thatched hermitage," which now became her summer resort, was built upon pleasant grounds in the parish of Wrington, ten miles from Bristol, on the road to Exeter. Martha, otherwise Patty, was her housekeeper and companion; the other sisters were frequent visitors. Mrs. Kenicott pleaded for the privilege of being "rammed, crammed and jammed there" during the second summer of Hannah's occupancy, and recapitulated some of the joys of her first visit in a letter to her late hostess:

"I long to be trimming honeysuckles, broiling chops, and talking sentiment with you, my dear friend Patty, and am an excellent gypsey cook, while Governess beholds with astonishment, and Sister Betty is preparing for us in the house, with the vain expectation that we shall, some time or other, come into it, and look like gentlefolks."

“The most perfect little hermitage that can be conceived,” thus the proud mistress paints it to John Newton. “A pretty, quiet cottage which I built myself two years ago.” (This is in 1787.) “There is a great deal of picturesque scenery about it. The care of my garden gives me employment, health and spirits. I have always fancied, if I could secure to myself such a quiet retreat as I have now really accomplished, I should be wonderfully good. . . . I have actually found a great deal of the comfort I expected, but without any of the concomitant virtues. . . . It is a very significant saying, though a very old one, of the Puritans, that ‘Hell is paved with good intentions.’ I sometimes tremble to think how large a square my procrastination alone may furnish to this tessellated pavement.”





CHAPTER VIII

DEATH OF DR. JOHNSON — THE “BRISTOL
MILK-WOMAN ” — REVIVAL OF “PERCY ” —
“THOUGHTS ON THE IMPORTANCE OF THE
MANNERS OF THE GREAT ”

DR. JOHNSON'S death (December 13, 1784) had produced a profound impression upon Miss More, and had its influence in turning the current of her thoughts and labours into the channel they never left during the last thirty years of her life. Her letter to her Bristol sisters containing the story of his last hours is solemn and dignified. After one of her later visits to him she had lamented to Mrs. Boscawen, “that his mind is still a prey to melancholy, and that the fear of death operates on him to the destruction of his peace.”

“It is grievous, it is unaccountable !”

she continues. "He who has the Christian hope upon the best foundation ; whose faith is strong, whose morals are irreproachable. But I am willing to ascribe it to bad nerves and to bodily disease."

It was, therefore, with devout thankfulness that his friend chronicled what she had learned from a letter from Mr. Pepys, relative to the closing scenes of Johnson's eventful mortal career :

"A friend desired he would make his will, and as Hume in his last moments had made an impious declaration of his opinions, he thought it might tend to counteract the poison if Johnson would make a public confession of his faith in his will. He said he would, seized the pen with great earnestness, and asked what was the usual form of beginning a will. His friend told him. After the usual forms he wrote—'I offer up my soul to the great and merciful God. I offer it full of pollution, but in full assurance that it will be cleansed in the blood of my Redeemer.'

"He talked of his death and funeral at times with great composure. On the Monday morning he fell into a sound sleep, and continued in that state for twelve hours, and then died without a groan.

"No action of his life became him like the leaving it. His death makes a kind of era in literature. Pity and goodness will not easily find a more able defender, and it is delightful to see him set, as it were, his dying seal to the professions of his life, and to the truth of Christianity."

Some weeks later she wrote :

“I have often told you that Sunday is not only my day of rest, but of enjoyment. I go twice to the churches where I expect the best preaching, frequently to St. Clement’s to hear my excellent friend, Burrowes. By the way, it gives me peculiar pleasure to think that there I partook of the Holy Sacrament with Johnson the last time he ever received it in public.

“It was very considerate in Mrs. Garrick to decline asking company on Sunday on my account, so that I enjoy the whole day to myself. I swallow no small portion of theology of different descriptions, as I always read, when visiting, such books as I do not possess at home. I devour much, but, I fear, digest little. In the evening I read a sermon and prayers to the family, which Mrs. Garrick much likes.”

Her intimacy with Horace Walpole grew and strengthened apace. He declared Cowslip Green to be a relation, cousin-german, at least, to Strawberry Hill, his beautiful and famous country-seat, and sent a complete collection of his writings, handsomely bound, to the “hermitage,” as a nucleus for Miss More’s library. When he was confined to his house by severe illness he summoned his vivacious friend, now rising forty, to cheat him into forgetfulness of bodily pain.

“Notwithstanding his sufferings I never found him so

pleasant, so witty, so entertaining," says Hannah. "I never knew a man suffer pain with such entire patience. This submission is certainly a most valuable part of religion, and yet alas ! he is not religious. I must, however, do him the justice to say, that except the delight he has in teasing me for what he calls 'over-strictness,' I have never heard a sentence from him which savoured of infidelity."

Upon the same page with the account of her visit to the brilliant scholar and diplomat, we are treated to a picture of a small party where were Burke, Sir Joshua Reynolds, Lords Palmerston and North, and at which Mrs. Fielding and Hannah More led in the game of Twenty Questions, the distinguished statesmen I have named joining in like eager schoolboys.

"And now" — concludes the faithful sister — "I hope to receive due praise for my implicit obedience in gratifying your insatiable curiosity with an account of almost every dinner I have eaten, and every person to whom I have spoken."

Still a repetition of the old story of the expensive boarding-school attended by one of the five, and, at second-hand, by all the rest. The close corporation was a perpetual institution, to which each member was constant unto death.

Another interview with Horace Walpole introduces an adventure almost too familiar to be repeated to anyone who is at all conversant with the outlines of Miss More's biography.

“Neither years nor sufferings can abate the entertaining powers of the pleasant Horace which rather improve than decay, 'though he himself says he is 'only fit to be a milk-woman as the chalk-stones at his finger-ends qualify him for nothing but scoring.' But he declares he will not be a *Bristol milk-woman*! I was obliged to recount to him all that odious tale.”

The “odious tale,” in brief, was this : The More sisters discovered in one Anne Yearsley, who brought milk to their door and carried away the garbage from the kitchen, a talent for verse-making and a taste for literature which, in their opinion, approximated genius. Hannah named her “Lactilla,” in the thousand letters of appeal addressed to rich and influential friends, and collected over six hundred pounds to be invested for Mrs. Yearsley's benefit. She also edited and arranged Lactilla's poems for the press. Besides money and useful articles to be used in the home in preparation for the genius, donations of books were

intrusted to Miss Moore. The gift of a set of *Bell's Edition of the Poets* from the Duchess of Devonshire was the direct means of exposing the real character of the poetical *protégée*. Pending the purchase of shelves upon which the books could be arranged in the Yearsleys' cottage, they were placed in the Cowslip Green library. Lactilla thereupon wrote to the Duchess, declaring that Miss More meant to keep them for herself. She asserted, moreover, that the six hundred pounds were used in purchasing an estate for the mistress of Cowslip Green ; that Miss More had used her as a cat's-paw to fill her own purse ; that the pretended benefactress was envious of Lactilla's talents and bent upon her downfall, with much more coarse abuse and ungrateful railing that need not be recorded.

Mrs. Montagu had contributed liberally to the fund collected by the thousand letters, and was warmly interested in the object. Yet she had advised her friend kindly and tactfully in the beginning of the enterprise to inform herself as much as was practicable as to Lactilla's temper, disposition, and moral character.

"It has sometimes happened to me that, by an endeavour to encourage talents and cherish virtue by driving from them the terrifying spectre of pale poverty, I have introduced a legion of little demons. Vanity, luxury, idleness and pride have entered the cottage the moment poverty vanished."

The caution was prophetic. When Anne Yearsley insisted violently upon receiving every shilling of the principal committed in trust to Mrs. Montagu and Miss More, instead of accepting the interest, the ladies put the affair into a lawyer's hands for settlement. He made a rich Bristol merchant trustee of the fund, and the latter was fairly worried into yielding it to the termagant. With it she stocked a circulating library at the Hot Wells, and never ceased to regale such patrons as would listen to her with stories of Hannah More's hypocrisy, envy, and greed.

"Had she turned out well," philosophised impressive Hannah, "I should have had my reward. I have had my trial. Perhaps I was too elated at my success and in counting over the money, I might be elated and think — 'Is not this great Babylon which I have builded?' "

In the same tone of unresentful humility she tells Mr. Pepys :

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"I confess my weakness,—it goes to my heart, not for my own sake, but for the sake of our common nature. Do not let this harden your heart or mine against any future object. *Fate bene per voi* is a beautiful maxim."

To Mrs. Carter she pleads for the ingrate :

"Prosperity is a great trial and she could not stand it. I was afraid it would turn her head, but I did not expect it would harden her heart. I continue to take the same care of her pecuniary interests and am bringing out a second edition of her poems. My conscience tells me I ought not to give up my trust for those poor children on account of their mother's wickedness. This will not steel your heart, nor, I trust, mine, against the next distress that may present itself to us ; but there are many on whom, I fear, it may have that effect."

Prosperity and adulation had not shaken her own brain from its just balance, or altered the warm, tender heart. The success of her published writings was a continual surprise to her. Her estimate of drama, poem, and essay was so far beneath that of critic and general reader that she descried an element of absurdity in the popular verdict.

When *The Search after Happiness* was

disinterred and brought out in a new and modern dress, she laughingly gave the copyright to her sister Patty, her favourite of the four—if she had a favourite. As the work of a seventeen-year-old school-girl it could hardly be approved by the admirers of the far better work elaborated by her deft pen twenty-three years afterward. How the result of Cadell's venture impressed her, we see in a home-letter (1787) :

“ I believe Patty will be a great fortune at last, for the ninth edition of my present to her — *The Search after Happiness*—has gone to the press. I am really shocked at the public taste which has taken off ten thousand copies of a poem which I have not the patience to read.”

Her sturdy humility had a further and a harder trial in the revival of *Percy* upon the London stage, with Mrs. Siddons as *Elwina*. Meeting Mr. Pepys at a quiet dinner at Mrs. Chapone's, for which snug party of three Hannah had “refused one of the finest assemblies in London—very grand and very dull,” he told her that he had had a great struggle whether to come to Mrs. Chapone's, or to go to the theatre

to see *Percy*, finally concluding "to give up the child for the sake of the mother."

"They were astonished at my not being there. I told them I had been able to resist Shakspeare so many years there was no great philosophy in withstanding the poet of that night. The next day I had another attack. I dined with Sir Joshua, Mr. Burke, and two or three others of that stamp. They cried, all at once—'Were you not delighted with Mrs. Siddons last night in *Percy*?' I replied, 'No, for I did not see her.' They would not believe me guilty of such insensibility, adding,—'She did it exquisitely, as the tears of Mr. Fox, who sat with us, testified.'"

This was no affectation of humility. The earnest, chastened spirit was intent upon higher things; the mature mind rejected husks. She had seen the best and the worst of the world of polite letters and gilded follies. At Hampton, to which dear retreat Mrs. Garrick took her in the spring, to Hannah's "great joy, to dissipate colds and gather violets," she devoted more space to longings for her garden at Cowslip Green, dreams of the blossoming apple-trees and the avenue of limes she had set out in the autumn, than to a magnificent assembly at Lady Amherst's she had attended just before leaving London.

Royalties were there in groups, the Prince of Wales among them, "as usual all gayety and gracefulness." He asked that Miss More should be presented to him. He had "often wished to see her." John Home, the author of *Douglas*, had breakfasted at Mrs. Garrick's.

"Douglas writes no more, but has hung up his harp, as well as Percy. It is time for us both to take our leave of poetry."

It is significant of the growing change in her tastes and ambitions that the "author whom she ventures most to recommend" is Mrs. Trimmer, from whom she had a long call in London. This lady is best known by her *Tracts for the Poor*, and children's books.

"I made one lady take three dozen of her books yesterday," says practical Hannah, after speaking of the visible change in Brentford morals and manners in consequence of Mrs. Trimmer's labours. "I presumed to give her a great deal of good, wholesome advice about booksellers; for, popular as I am persuaded she must be, she has got little or nothing by her writings except reputation and the consciousness of doing good, on which two things 'though I set all due value, yet where there are ten children money must have the eleventh place in maternal consideration."

There were twelve children when she visited Mrs. Trimmer in Brentford a couple of years afterward, and the compassionate reader will unite in my hope that the worldly wisdom of the spinster-author had brought forth the lucrative fruits of pounds, shillings, and pence in addition to the goodly blossoms of reputation and the approval of conscience with which the prolific matron had been well content up to her meeting with Miss More.

Each of the charming letters in the collection before me is a distinct temptation to the pen of the copyist. Every sketch is graphic and bold ; the list of names would fill a Blue Book of fashion and fame. I yield to the temptation to give the devotees of nineteenth-century “Teas” a glimpse of the more formidable rite which bore the name in the eighteenth.

“A *Thé* is among the stupid new follies of the winter [1788]. You are to invite fifty, or a hundred people to come at eight o'clock. There is to be a long table, or little parties at small tables ; the cloth is to be laid as at breakfast ; everyone has a napkin ; tea and coffee are made by the company, as at a public breakfast ; the table is covered with rolls, wafers, bread and butter, — and what constitutes the very essence of a *Thé*, — an immense load of hot buttered rolls and muffins, all

admirably contrived to create a nausea in persons fresh from the dinner-table.

"Now, of all nations under the sun, as I take it, the English are the greatest of fools. Because the Duke of Dorset in Paris, where people dine at two, thought this would be a pretty fashion to introduce, we, who dine at six, must adopt this French translation of an English fashion, and fall into it as if it were an original invention. This will be a short folly."

It lived long enough to be imported into certain of the newly made States of America, the war being over and the chase of foreign novelties in full swing. The late and ponderous teas in vogue in some of the Southern States, where dinner is never served before three P.M., are a relic of the "stupid folly," superseded in our generation by the simplest of social functions,—the sensible "Afternoon Tea" of our English cousins.

It is pleasant to us, as lovers of the Olney bard, to find Hannah More quoting to John Newton, his leal friend and admirer, Cowper's "God made the country and man made the town," when she had been for some weeks in the quiet enjoyment of Cowslip Green.

"The world is wiped out of my memory as with the sponge of oblivion," she declares. "But, as I have observed to you before, so much do my gardening cares

and pleasures occupy me, that the world is not half so formidable a rival to heaven in my heart as my garden.”

Eight months prior to the date of this letter (July, 1788) the world—or what stood with the rural moralist for it—was stirred to its centre by the appearance of a small volume published by Cadell, with no hint as to the authorship. The title was long, didactic, and, to our apprehension, heavily uninviting. The author, when disclosed, feared that it was “a sounding title,”—*Thoughts on the Importance of the Manners of the Great to General Society*.

Could a publisher outside of a Tract House be found for such a treatise at the present day and in our country, the book would fall from the press like a stone into the depths of the sea of oblivion, creating no more sensation upon the surface than the bursting of a bubble in mid-Atlantic. This may be because there are no titled Great among us ; perhaps the many untitled Great ones are so wise in their own conceit that they heed no admonition. The effect of the anonymous publication upon London society was like the explosion of a submarine torpedo. This was the more remarkable because the little book was

neither satire nor story. The writer had resorted to no tricks of authorial or the advertiser's art to attract notice to the protest against "the less obvious offences that are, in general, safe from the bar, the pulpit, or the throne, yet which do much harm to inferiors."

The allusion to the remonstrance of "the throne" was at once interpreted by all who had read the *Royal Proclamation against Vice and Immorality* recently put forth by the reigning sovereign, the respectable sire of the First Gentleman in Europe. It was a dull and soggy production, and in the circumstances likely to be as efficient as the Pope's bull against the comet.

The *Thoughts* were couched in Addisonian English. The aim was direct; the "offences" were patent, and were dealt with with forceful simplicity. Assuming the duty of the superior to the subordinate in the matter of example, the Great were admonished that divers practices they never thought of considering even minor vices were lowering the standard of right and wrong among the common people. The hair-dresser who obeyed My Lady's summons on Sunday; the footman whose glib

“not at home” was put into his mouth by his mistress, seated at her ease in her drawing-room ; the servant who pocketed the fee for furnishing a clean pack of cards to his master and his gambling companions ; the maid who laid the rouge upon her mistress’s cheeks — were so many apprentices in the sins of Sabbath-breaking, gaming, and lying.

With regard to the “card-money” evil, the appeal was for other employers, no less than for the servant’s own good :

“If the advantage of the dependent is to increase in a direct ratio with the dissipation of his employer, what encouragement is left for valuable servants, or what prospect remains of securing valuable servants for sober-minded families ? ”

And as to fashionable falsehoods :

“Nor should the master look for undeviating and perfect rectitude from his servant in whom the principle of veracity is daily and hourly weakened in conformity with his own command.”





CHAPTER IX

WONDERFUL POPULARITY OF "THE MANNERS"
—DISCOVERY OF THE AUTHOR—FANNY BUR-
NEY AND HANNAH MORE—COWSLIP GREEN
AS A PERMANENT ABODE

WITHIN a week after the publication of *Thoughts on the Importance of the Manners of the Great to General Society*, a second edition was demanded. This was exhausted in six days; a third, hurriedly put upon the market, in one forenoon.

Conjecture ran riot as to the author. He was assuredly a person of education and of such breeding as had given him a chance to investigate in person the abuses he would reform. The Bishop of London (Dr. Porteus) had been outspoken upon some of the subjects dealt with by the fearless critic. What more probable than that he had chosen the mask of a layman

under which to assail what a clergyman would be supposed to treat perfunctorily? Another faction contended for the extreme likelihood that William Wilberforce — born agitator and reformer, now in the full tide of the religious enthusiasm which was to bear him into the forefront of the battle with churchly formalism and state corruptions — had set his virile pen to paper in these practical essays.

In support of this theory there were not wanting those who recalled an anecdote, told by him with regret and self-condemnation which his fashionable acquaintances thought morbidly disproportionate to the occasion. He had discharged a servant for habitual lying, and was answered by the fellow, impudently, that he had learned his first lesson in falsehood from himself. Mr. Wilberforce, being too busy one day to see visitors, had told the footman to say that his master was “not at home,” should anyone call. As a titled youth had excused his suicide by writing that “what Cato did, and Addison approved, could not be wrong,” the flunkey assumed that what “so religious a man as his master” did, and ordered his servants to do, must be right.

It was well known that the incident had moved Mr. Wilberforce to the resolution never again to allow the false and fashionable phrase to be used in his household. The story was a strong link in the chain of circumstantial evidence fastening the authorship of the much-talked-of book upon the philanthropist, who, at the tender age of fourteen, had written and published a newspaper article, *In Condemnation of the Odious Traffic in Human Flesh*.

This hypothesis was warmly supported by no less a personage than Thomas Bruce, Earl of Elgin, the celebrated archæologist to whom England owes the Elgin Marbles in the British Museum. The active interest he took in the modest treatise is a side-light upon the effect produced by it in the highest circles of the realm.

In a conversation with the Bishop of London, Lord Elgin "assured him, as a certain fact," that Mr. Wilberforce, and nobody else, wrote what was popularly (as was natural) abbreviated in common speech into *The Manners of the Great*. The Bishop's right—put forward by his admirers—to the paternity of the book was disposed of by the author's assertion, in



WILLIAM WILBERFORCE, M.P.

FROM A PICTURE BY J. RISING

the body of the work, that he was not a clergyman.

Lord Elgin's next call, after leaving the Bishop's house, was upon William Wilberforce. He found that gentleman with *Manners of the Great* in his hand, and the first words were in such praise of it as put his Lordship's theories to flight. Mr. Wilberforce not merely denied the authorship, but declared that he was ignorant as to who had written it.

Cadell called upon the author for a fourth edition "to be put to press immediately," and his exultation may have made him a trifle indiscreet in the talk with "almost all the Bishops" of which he speaks to the anonymous notoriety. The first intimation Hannah More had of the discovery of her carefully guarded secret was through an unsigned epigram that came one morning with the rest of her mail. It accompanied a copy of *Manners of the Great*:

"Of sense and religion in this little book
All agree there's a wonderful store ;
But while round the world for an author they look
I only am wishing for *More*."

"I think I know the hand," writes Hannah. "I am a little frightened, but nobody has betrayed me. It is

only by the internal evidence that it is guessed at. When the author is discovered I shall expect to find almost every door shut against me ;—*mais, n'importe !* I shall only be sent to my darling retirement.

“I spent Saturday evening at Lady Amherst's. The Book lay on the table. Several of the company took it up and talked it over, and Mr. Pepys looked me through, so that I never had such difficulty to keep my countenance. A day or two before I dined at the Bishop of Salisbury's. I was obliged to hear him, Mrs. Montagu, and the Bishop of Lincoln talk it over with the greatest warmth. All commended it, ‘ though some of the company thought it rather too strict, but the Bishops justified it.’ ”

“The Bishops” seemed to have been particularly brisk in investigation, as well as in commendation, of the lay-woman's missionary work to the great of the earth. Mrs. Trimmer and Miss More called together upon the Bishop of Salisbury (Dr. Horsley), and the learned host took occasion to remark that he was “sitting between two very remarkable women. One has undertaken to reform all the poor, and the other all the great.”

Then, bowing to Mrs. Trimmer, he added, “I congratulate you upon having the more hopeful subjects.”

Hannah's sister Patty had been her confidante all throughout the writing of the

book. Besides her publisher, she had no other.

"My book is now before the public, with its sounding title," she had written to Martha on publication-day. "In it I have not gone deep. It is but a superficial view of the subject. It is confined to prevailing practical evils. Should this succeed, I hope, by the blessing of God, another time to attack more strongly the principle. I have not owned myself the author; not so much because of that fear of man which 'worketh a snare,' as because, if anonymous, it may be ascribed to some better person, and because of fear that I do not live as I write."

(The old haunting dread lest hers should not be esteemed "practical piety!")

"I hope it may be useful to myself, at least, as I give a sort of public pledge of my principles to which I pray I may be enabled to live up."

The success of the sober, didactic disquisition was as amazing to her as it is to us. When Cadell pressed her to revise a fourth edition, she found it "unaccountable." When a fifth ran off the press into the eager hands of purchasers, she comments:

"I am astonished at the unexpected and undeserved popularity of *The Manners*. It is in the houses of all 'the Great.' Did I tell you that some time ago Mr.

Smelt walked up to me, and said, without any preface,— ‘ Well, the ladies will give up everything but the Sunday hair-dresser.’ You may be sure I looked very wise.”

Mr. Smelt had been one of the tutors to the Princes when they were young, and was still an *attaché* of the Royal household. His name is so closely associated in our minds with Fanny Burney’s *Diary* that we break off the story of our present heroine’s life to synchronise with it the experiences of the younger author, whose novels, *Evelina* and *Cæcilia*, had been the talk of their day.

When, at the height of the London season of 1788, Mr. Smelt—always “ Fanny’s ” friend and admirer—was congratulating Miss More in a gay assembly upon her latest book, Miss Burney had led for two years, and was to endure for three more, the life thus described by Lord Macaulay :

“ What was demanded of her was that she should consent to be as completely separated from her family as if she had gone to Calcutta, and almost as close a prisoner as if she had been sent to gaol for a libel ; that, with talents which had instructed and delighted the highest living minds, she should now be employed only in mixing snuff and sticking pins ; that she should be summoned by a waiting-woman’s bell to a waiting-

woman's duties ; — that she should sometimes fast until she was ready to swoon with hunger ; should sometimes stand 'till her knees gave way with fatigue ; that she should not dare to speak or move without considering how her mistress might like her words and gestures. And what was the consideration for which she was to sell herself to this slavery ? The price at which she was valued was her board, her lodging, the attendance of a man-servant, and two hundred pounds a year. The man who, even hard-pressed by hunger, sells his birthright for a mess of pottage, is unwise,—but what shall we say of him who parts with his birthright, and does not get even the pottage in return ? ”

Miss Burney adds telling touches, peculiarly her own, to this sketch of the Manners of the Very Great.

“ In the first place you must not cough. In the second place you must not sneeze.” (This is when in the presence of Royalty.) “ In the third place you must not, on any account, stir either hand or foot. If, by chance, a black pin runs into your head, you must not take it out. If the pain is very great, you must bear it without wincing. If it brings tears to your eyes, you must not wipe them off. If they give you a tingling by running down your cheeks, you must look as if nothing was the matter. If the blood should gush from your head by means of the black pin, you must let it gush. If the agony is very great you may privately bite the inside of your cheek, or of your lips, for a little relief.—Only be sure either to swallow the bitten piece, or commit it to a corner of the inside of your mouth

until they " (the Very Great) "are gone — for you must not spit."

And, again, in a letter to her sister :

" Can you blame the plan that I have intentionally been forming — namely, to wean myself from myself — to lessen all my affections — to curb all my wishes — to deaden all my sentiments? To support the loss of the dearest friends, and best society, and bear, in exchange, the *exigeance*, the *ennui* and attempted indignities of their greatest contrast — this must be my constant endeavour."

Yet, we read, a few chapters back, of the joy of heart which thrilled the censor of the Manners of the Great at news of Miss Burney's appointment. Verily, the divinity that doth hedge a king doth dazzle the clearest eyes and confuse the most upright conscience.

Hannah, in her darling retirement of Cowslip Green, "a perfect outlaw from all civil society and regular life, employed 'from morn to noon, from noon to dewy eve,' in raising dejected pinks and reforming disorderly honeysuckles," is, by comparison with "little Burney's" slavery, a princess in her own right.

After this second digression from the

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straight path of our narrative *apropos* of charming Fanny Burney,—a digression that has somewhat relieved the pressure upon my republican sympathies, if it has not entertained my readers,—return we to “The Book” and its influence upon the public of Great and lesser readers.

There is a smack of gentle satire that may have been unintentional, in Hannah's reference in the letter which alludes to the “undeserved popularity” of *The Manners*, to a report that “*Madame de Sevigné's Letters* are going into disrepute. I am sorry,” she says dryly, “that good taste is so much on the decline.”

Her account of the interview with Horace Walpole after her friends had virtually acknowledged that the famous book was hers, is so characteristic of both that I cannot refrain from giving it entire :

“He said not a word of the little sly book, but took me to task in general terms for having exhibited such monstrously severe doctrines. I knew he alluded to the *Manners of the Great*, but we pretended not to understand one another, and it was a most ridiculous conversation. He defended (and that was the joke !) Religion against me, and said he would do so against the whole bench of Bishops ; that the Fourth Commandment was the most amiable and merciful law that

was ever promulgated, as it entirely considers the ease and comfort of the hard-labouring poor and beasts of burden ; but that it never was intended for persons of fashion, who have no occasion to rest, as they never do anything on the other days, and indeed, at the time the law was made, there were no people of fashion.

“ He really pretended to be in earnest, and we parted, mutually unconverted, he lamenting that I am fallen into the heresy of puritanical strictness, and I lamenting that he is a person of fashion for whom the Ten Commandments were never made.”

Nothing which was said of her book or her “heresies” wrought her up to the pitch of earnestness displayed in her long criticisms of Gibbon’s *History of the Decline and Fall of Rome*.

“ I have almost waded through that mass of impiety and bad taste,” she breaks out to Mr. Pepys. “ I protest I think that, if this book were to become the standard of style and Religion, Christianity and the English language would decay pretty nearly together, and the same period would witness the downfall of sound principles and good taste. I have seldom met with more affectation or less perspicuity. The instances of false English are many, and of false taste endless.”

And to Mrs. Boscawen :

“ I think I shall never get through. I sit down to it with disgust and rise unentertained — I had almost said, enraged. With what malignant delight does he dwell

on the first corruptions of the Church and how does he enjoy the failings of the Fathers ! of which, truth to speak, there is a plentiful crop. He does not, as in the first volume, stab openly with the broad sabre of Infidelity, yet, where he finds a sore place, instead of mollifying it with ointment, how does he delight to pour over it cold aconite and deadly hellebore ! ”

The Bristol letters of 1789 mention slightly the correction of the proofs of the seventh edition of *Manners*, of which Hannah remarks, “Instead of being thankful, as I ought to be, I was rather provoked at such a disagreeable job,” and passes on to the discussion of what was then the prominent topic in everybody’s mind—the insanity of George the Third. Fanny Burney, in her gilded “gaol,” was writing quires in her private journal on the same theme, telling her sisters, who were not to read the entrancing pages for months after they were penned, the details of a national calamity which Hannah More deplores to the faithful quartette in the old home, while rehearsing the few particulars of the tragedy which the newspapers were allowed to print, or which leaked out through the jealously closed gates of the palace. The temporary relief to the country at large

consequent upon what was believed to be the King's complete and permanent recovery, found expression in a "constitutional ball" at court, which was the "best and pleasantest thing of the kind ever known," says Miss More. "All was loyalty and joy, and, for once, magnificence did not murder cheerfulness. Old Willis"—the physician to whose skill it was thought the King was indebted for the return of health—"supped at a little table with Pitt and two or three others, and was almost worshipped.

"To-morrow we go out of town for a week to live among the lilacs. How I shall enjoy the lilacs—and the leisure!"

Serious comments upon the monster procession to St. Paul's to return thanks for the King's recovery foreshadow the work she was soon to take up and never lay aside until her long period of active usefulness was over.

"The poor soldiers were on guard from three in the morning. I would willingly relinquish all the sights I may see this twelvemonth to have known they had, each, some cold meat and a pot of porter. I was troubled, too, about the six thousand charity children, but the Bishop assures me they had, each of them, a



HANNAH MORE'S TREE AT COWSLIP GREEN

roll and two apples. . . . I now begin to think there has been quite enough of singing, and dancing, and illuminating and eating, and drinking, on this joyful occasion, and cannot help thinking with the Lady in *Comus*, that we 'praise God amiss.' I begin to want to see this very important blessing recorded by some public act of pious munificence and charity."

She finished Gibbon amid the lilacs and the leisure of Cowslip Green in 1789, and deals him a last smart rap in a letter to Mrs. Carter :

"I had no other way of coming at the history of the *Bas Empire* but by wading through that offensive and objectionable book. I do not know whether he takes most pains to corrupt the principles, or to pervert the taste of his reader. Luckily, I cannot read Greek, but those who do assure me that many of the notes are grossly indecent. I am sure this is the case with many of those which I can read."

In October of this year she paid a visit to the Bishop's palace at Salisbury, where she was ever a welcome guest. In these sojourns she gained the familiarity with the surrounding country which gives such a charming touch of local colour to *The Shepherd of Salisbury Plain*.

As the year neared its close she retired to the "perfect little hermitage" of Cowslip Green in company with her best-beloved

sister Martha. Mary, Elizabeth, Sarah, and Martha were building a handsome house in Great Poultney Street, Bath, and preparing to settle themselves therein for the rest of their lives. In thirty-odd years of teaching they had amassed a comfortable fortune, and now withdrew from business, intending to spend the rest of their days in comparative leisure, dividing their time between Bath and Cowslip Green. In the opinion of their friends they had richly earned the respite from professional labours, and Hannah the long-coveted right to live all the year round with her books, her flowers, and the few chosen intimates who loved her well enough to leave the gay world for her sylvan retreat.

The dream was as fair as it was innocent ; the fulfilment seemed close at hand.





CHAPTER X

CHEDDAR, AND THE BEGINNING OF A GREAT
WORK THERE—ANOTHER ANONYMOUS BOOK
—THE OPINIONS EXPRESSED AS TO ITS MERITS
BY BISHOP PORTEUS AND JOHN NEWTON

“**M**ISS HANNAH MORE ! something
must be done for Cheddar !”

The speaker was William Wilberforce, now just thirty years of age, slight of figure, narrow-chested, thin-visaged, and short-sighted. Always infirm of health, he had been spending in Bath the brief vacation granted him by the Parliamentary recess, and had accepted the invitation of the More sisters to run over to them for a day or two. Early in the morning after his arrival he had set out in a chaise for a day in the open air among the romantic hills and vales of Cheddar, about ten miles distant from Cowslip Green. A hamper of

provisions packed under the seat of the carriage was to serve him for an *al fresco* luncheon.

He returned at sunset, so quiet and pale that his hostesses thought him seriously indisposed, a fear confirmed by his going abruptly up to his room, and the discovery of the untouched luncheon where they had put it in the chaise.

No questions were asked when he came down to supper, and no remark was made upon his lack of appetite for the meal, and evident abstraction, until the servant who had waited at table left the room. Then he electrified the three women—the two Mores and his own sister—by the exclamation at the head of this chapter. The great antislavery advocate had had his eyes rudely opened to the poverty, ignorance, and spiritual destitution of the populace which had dogged him all day, like figures in an horrible and incredible dream. They had begged from him at every step, and when he talked with them after emptying his pockets of all the money he had with him, they told tales of hungry families and unfed souls that made his heart sick.

The living of Cheddar was in the gift of

the Vicar of Wells. The tithes amounted to fifty pounds per annum. The incumbent did not pretend to live in the parish, or to do any religious duty therein. His home was in Oxford, and he had "something to do" in the University there. His curate lived at Wells, twelve miles from Cheddar. One service was held in the parish church on Sunday, but there was no cottage visiting, no catechising of the children ; no attention was paid to the sick and poor.

The talk which followed Mr. Wilberforce's story lasted far into the night. When he returned to London, the fire kindled by him burned steadily. Hannah and Patty made a circuit of the regions lying in darkness and reported strange things to their director.

The richest man in the district was a sort of ogre, living near Bridgewater, "in a country as savage as himself."

We will let Hannah's facile pen tell part of the tale of the preliminary canvass prior to the establishment of what would be known now as a "Mission."

"He begged I would not think of bringing any religion into the country. It 'was the worst thing in the

world for the poor, for it made them lazy and useless.' In vain did I represent to him that they would be more industrious as they were better-principled, and that, for my part, I had no selfish views in what I was doing. He gave me to understand that he knew the world too well to believe either the one or the other. If these rich savages set their faces against us, it was clear that nothing but hostilities would ensue ; so I made eleven more of these agreeable visits, and as I improved the art of canvassing, I had better success. Miss Wilberforce would have been shocked had she seen the petty tyrants whose insolence I stroked and tamed ; the ugly children I fondled ; the pointers and spaniels I caressed ; the cider I commended and the wine I swallowed.

"After these irresistible flatteries I inquired of each if he could recommend to me a house" (for a school) "and said that I had a little plan which I hoped would secure their orchards from being robbed, their rabbits from being shot, poultry from being stolen, and which might lower the poor-rates.

"Patty, who was with me, says she has good hope that the hearts of some of these rich poor wretches may be touched. They are, at present, as ignorant as the beasts that perish, intoxicated every day before dinner and plunged in such vices as make me begin to think London a virtuous place."

She rented a house large enough to receive a goodly number of children, and proposed to open, immediately, such a Sunday-school as Robert Raikes, whom she knew in London, had organised in several other places. Besides this, a day-school

would be conducted by another teacher than the Mrs. Easterbrook "of whose judgment" the Misses More "had a good opinion." Hannah interpolates, sportively :

"I hope Miss Wilberforce will not be frightened, but I am afraid she" (the teacher) "must be called a Methodist."

"If you will be at the trouble, I will be at the expense," Mr. Wilberforce had said, and Hannah apologises for having taken the house for seven years at an annual rent of six and a half guineas.

"There's courage for you!" she continues. "It is to be put in order immediately, for 'the night cometh,' and it is a comfort to think that 'though I may be dust and ashes in a few weeks, yet by that time this business will be in actual motion."

Of one curate she writes :

"Mr. G—— is intoxicated about six times a week, and very frequently is prevented from preaching by two black eyes, honestly earned by fighting."

By the end of the summer, the beginning of which saw the inauguration of the enterprise, Hannah relates with devout gratitude the "uncommon prosperity" in the Cheddar School which comforts and encourages

her. Children who had not known the alphabet when they entered the classes, could read the New Testament, recite the catechism, and "give pertinent answers to any questions which involve the first principles of Christianity." All the sisters were crowded into the thatched cottage at Cowslip Green, the Bath house being not quite ready for occupancy.

"I am made for this dull, quiet life," declares Hannah, "and have almost lost all taste for any other. We cultivate roses and cabbages *con spirito*."

Her mind had not changed when the three elders removed to "the new mansion" leaving Hannah and Patty in Wrington.

"I have never crept out of the 'Cowslip's Bell' since I crept into it, and it is with sorrow and regret I find the time approaching when my sisters will expect me to join them at Bath. I hate Bath! . . . It is grievous to reflect that, while we are sending missionaries to our distant colonies our own villages are perishing for lack of instruction. We have in this neighbourhood thirteen adjoining parishes without so much as even a resident curate. . . . We have established schools and various little institutions over a tract of country of ten or twelve miles, and have near five hundred children in training."

Martha More remained in Wrington when Hannah paid her usual winter visit to Mrs. Garrick at Hampton, whither the conscientious thinker and worker carried Cheddar and its claims upon a burdened heart, brooding over the wretchedness she could but partially relieve, the pagan^a darkness into which the system of schools watched over by Patty in her absence shed so few gleams of light. In March, 1790, she confers with her sister over the project of allowing the parents to share in the instruction given to their children:

“ We will, at first, limit the number. As to the time, an hour will be quite sufficient. More would break in upon the children’s time, and take parents too long from their own families. They are so ignorant that they need to be taught the very elements of Christianity. Speak to Mr. Foster, the clergyman, on the subject. He is disposed to be obliging and kind. He must see that it will enable them to understand his sermons better at church and bring more people there.”

Her mind was too much engrossed with the sad realities of human want to allow her to take pleasure in the glittering round of London gaieties. She bemoaned the passing away of the “little old parties.” Everything was “great and vast, and

magnificent. The old were all growing young, and seventy dressed like seventeen." Johnson, Garrick, Adams, Kennicott, and wonderful, beautiful Mrs. Delany were dead ; Mrs. Vesey, at whose house the *Bas Bleu* grew into permanence and power, had lost her mind and was a pitiable wreck of a once fascinating woman for years before the dissolution of her body. The set which had made city-life tolerable to one of Hannah's eager intellect and lofty ideas was broken up, and no new admirers and friends could reunite the magic circle. The spirit of the reformer had laid hold of her. It was not in vain that she had corresponded with Great Heart Newton, and wrought with pen and tongue and purse with Wilberforce to overthrow slavery. In the winter of 1790 she published a volume, uniform in size with *Manners*, and as fearless in tone, entitled *An Estimate of the Religion of the Fashionable World*. Like its predecessor, it was sent anonymously out to try its fortune in the World it criticised. It was bought up readily and read with interest. In partial explanation of what is phenomenal to us, Roberts writes :

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“ Hers was the solitary case in the whole history of man and his anomalies in which severe and sober truth was enabled to make its way through all the obstacles of habit, interest, and prejudice, without art, stratagem, or machinery. She went forth with her sling, and her pebbles from the clear brook, and triumphed.”

The commotion produced by the book was the greater because it was avowedly a reply to a pamphlet, optimistic and latitudinarian in character, written by the Duke of Grafton, under the title of *Hints to an Association for Preventing Vice and Immorality*. According to his easy-going Grace, the World stood less in need of reformation than the Church itself. That was, he asserted, the “Age of Benevolence.” Morality was flourishing apace, and genuine religion more prevalent than ever before. If people did not go to church they had good reasons for staying away. A man would be saved by his life, not his creed. His heart might be right in the sight of God, although he did not accept the Athanasian Creed, and was wearied by the vain repetitions of the Litany.

Like the valiant Churchwoman she was, Miss More pleads pertinently and reverently for the formula endeared to her by early association and devout usage :

“If we do not find a suitable humiliation in the Confession, becoming earnestness in the Petitions, a congenial joy in the Adoration, a corresponding gratitude in the Thanksgivings, it is because our hearts do not accompany our words.”

As was to be expected, the thin veil of anonymity was soon torn into shreds. The author's sentiments and style were, by now, too well known for her to hope for concealment. Mrs. Boscawen set this forth gracefully in a congratulatory letter :

“Your plan of secrecy would have succeeded perfectly and you would have been perfectly concealed if giants could be concealed. But if, like Saul, you are higher than any of the people from the shoulders and upwards, you must be conspicuous.”

She goes on to say that having heard Miss More had published another book she had said that she did not believe it, having received no presentation copy from publisher or author. Being assured that she would change her opinion after reading the work, she had ordered a copy.

“Then, the giant appeared, and so plainly that, having read some twenty pages, I sent the man back for four more. A few days afterwards I received the great favour of a present of a copy from the Bishop of London himself, which you may believe I value very highly.”

Each edition was exhausted as fast as it was printed. It was a sermon-loving age, when people read homilies without ennui, and relished hard hitting. Nowadays, nobody but the scholar reads Addison, and the scholar finds Johnson's long-winded periods tiresome. We must have concentrated mind-food, and the capsule must be goodly to view. Even the sober-minded would consider Hannah More's *Estimate* sensible, but dry, reading. That she was a power for righteousness in her long generation, we must take upon the testimony of her best and wisest contemporaries. With the Bishop of London's attestation to this effect and that of Rev. John Newton we will close this stage of her manifold labours for the good of her class and her kind :

“ *St. James Square, 1790.*

“ ‘*Aut Erasmus aut Diabolus !*’ was, you know, the laconic and expressive speech of Sir Thomas More to a certain stranger who had astonished him with a torrent of wit, eloquence and learning.

“ ‘*Aut Morus aut Angelus !*’ exclaimed the Bishop of London, before he had read six pages of a certain delicate little book that was sent to him a few days ago.

“ Such precisely was the note I was sitting down to write to you at the very moment I received your full and

true confession of that mortal sin of presuming once more to disturb the sweet repose and tranquillity of the fashionable world. . . .

“There are but few persons, I will venture to say, in Great Britain that could write such a book ;—that could convey so much sound, evangelical morality and so much genuine Christianity in such neat and elegant language. It will, if I mistake not, soon find its way into every fine lady’s library, and if it do not find its way into her heart and her manners the fault will be her own.

“Mrs. Porteus desires to be very affectionately and gratefully remembered to you,—gratefully for the pleasure she received from the *Estimate*, for I read it to her last night, and we thought the evening as well and as pleasantly spent as if we had been at the Pantheon.”

Such praise from the learned author of *A Summary of the Evidences of Christianity* must command our respect.

John Newton was less sanguine as to the favour the book might meet with in polite circles :

“The fashionable world,” he wrote to Miss More, “by their numbers form a phalanx not easily impressible, and their habits of life are as armour of proof which renders them not easily vulnerable. Neither the rude club of a boisterous reformer, nor the pointed delicate weapons of the authoress before me can overthrow or rout them. But I do hope that an individual, here and there, may be wounded and made to wince, and apply for healing to the leaves of the tree of life.

“ In such an age as this it is an honour and a privilege to be able and willing to bear a testimony against evil and in favour of the truth, 'though it should go no further. We are not answerable for the success, but we are bound to the attempt, according to the talents and opportunities afforded. I trust the writer of the *Estimate* will hear in that Day,—

“ ‘ Forasmuch as it was in thine heart, thou didst well that it *was* in thine heart.’

“ In short, Madam, if, among the present members of the fashionable world, any can be found unprejudiced and free from deep prepossessions — or so far as they are so — I expect and hope that the *Estimate*, if it comes in their way, will prove to them, ‘ as a light shining in a dark place,’ for which they will have reason to praise God and to thank the writer.”





CHAPTER XI

MR. NEWTON AT COWSLIP GREEN—OBSTACLES
TO THE MENDIP MISSION MET AND OVERCOME
—OPPOSITION FROM A NEW QUARTER

MR. NEWTON'S string of pessimistic "ifs" did not interpose a barrier to the continued friendship between him and the popular author of the *Estimate*. Mrs. Boscawen reckoned her a giant. Blunt John warned her that the Giant's Causeway was likely to be no better than a sandbar, to be carried out to sea by the sweeping waves of folly and pleasure. She ought to have known him well enough by this time not to be utterly cast down by his strictures. It was his habit to see things through smoked glasses.

In another epistle to Miss More, he bemoaned himself over what he thought was Cowper's lapse from the higher walks of literature and morality :

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“ I have heard of the pompous edition of Milton that is to come abroad. I have not seen the printed proposals. The report sufficed for me. I am sorry to see the author of *The Task* degraded to a mere editor, 'though of Milton himself, whom I certainly prefer to a hundred Homers.”

The readers of Cowper's *Life* will recall that the poet accounted his translation of Homer his *magnum opus*. Mr. Newton was otherwise minded. He “mourns and mourns, and mourns” further to his correspondent :

“ It is pitiful, and to many who love him it seems strange, yea, passing strange that a writer so truly original should not favour us with writings in his own original way. It is not however quite strange to me. He has many friends, so-called, who, in the time of his recess, cared little about him 'till his name and fame as an author began to be spread abroad in the polite circles. Since that period they have buzzed about him, and by their fine words and fair speeches have imperceptibly given an inferior direction to his aims, and withdrawn him more out of my reach. For there was a time when he would not have undertaken a work of any extent without previously apprising me. The state of his mind makes me cautious how I express my grief and disappointment. Otherwise, I should write to him in large letters.”

Letters as large, doubtless, as those which conveyed to the semi-hermit of Olney his

mentor's opinion of the worldly gaieties going on at "Orchardside," under the impetus of Lady Hesketh's society.

Hannah More was a close, but never unkindly, reader of character and motive. Association with Johnson, Sheridan, Burke, Walpole — nay, with her own father, who eschewed "female pedants" — must have enlightened her as to the transparency and unconscious frankness of masculine vanity. She must have detected the spring of Newton's chagrin — hidden to himself alone — and had her own views as to poor Cowper's flagrant ingratitude, spiritual decadence, and degradation of taste. She had, also, abundance of tact, and knew how to soothe and divert the wounded spirit from dwelling upon its own hurts. In August, 1791, five months subsequent to the melancholy letter from which I have copied, Mr. Newton was domesticated for some weeks at Cowslip Green. The invitation accepted by the London worker was tempting :

"A little thatched cottage, a quiet cell, a few books, a maple dish and a dinner of herbs, are all you can, in reason, expect. But I hope we shall be able to furnish the appropriate sauce of 'quietness therewith,' for which I trust you will be contented to renounce the 'stalled ox' of noisy London."

More seriously the writer adds :

“I hope you will do some good in this dark region where the light of Christianity seems scarcely to have penetrated. We are sending missionaries to our colonies while our villages are perishing for lack of instruction. You will hardly believe the things you will see and hear in this neighbourhood.”

The guest was bettered in health—let us hope mellowed in judgment of his fellows—by the sojourn among the mountains of Mendip. His sleep in “the little hermitage at the foot of them” was sweet. He visited the parish schools in Cheddar, and in outlying districts so destitute of the common comforts of life as to awaken the wonder of one used to the meanest slums of the metropolis, and so nearly inaccessible that he doubted if it were right for women to try to visit them. He would, he says, if he could, “give Hannah and Patty, not shoes but nerves and sinews of iron and brass to fit them for traversing Mendip.” He led the family devotions, night and morning, talked and prayed with a sick maid, and held converse, sweet and pleasant to his soul, with the gracious brace of sisters. We have no more amiable presentation of him than as we see him strolling

up and down the garden alleys, smoking the pipe of serenity under the very windows of the spinsters' drawing-room. When he went away his pipe was left where he was wont to deposit it, in the heart of a thick black currant bush.

“That hand would be deemed most presumptuous and disrespectful which should presume to dislodge it,” writes Hannah, merrily. “For my own part, the pipe of Tityrus, though in my youthful days I liked it passing well, would not now be deemed a more venerable relic.”

That was a marvellous September — “a renewed spring,” she went on to tell the city man, pitying him that he was not in the vale of Cowslips to enjoy it.

“We have everything of the golden age except the innocence. The garden is full of roses as in June, and we have an apple-tree literally covered at the same moment with fruit nearly ripe and fresh blossoms.”

“And only man is vile !”

The antithetical line came to be the undertone of letters and thoughts. Mr. Newton confesses that he has imparted to his friend, Mr. Cowper,—dear, despite his vagaries in the direction of Sunday afternoon strolls, Homeric translations, and

Miltonic editorial studies,—his fears lest Miss More's absorption in the Mendip mission might deprive a waiting public of what they had a right to expect from her pen. Dr. Stonehouse, the revered rector of the sisters for forty years, wrote in a sportive vein a remonstrance to the same effect :

“Sally is a very good Sally. Sally came and took care of me when I was sick. Sally will answer my letters. Poetess is a great lady, and flies abroad on the wings of cherubim, twenty miles from Cowslip Green, and for what? Why, truly to see poor ragged boys and girls, and to teach *them* to fly.”

The five sisters were together at Cowslip Green that summer, and were one in the purpose which filled Hannah's mind and heart. The effort to teach ragged boys and girls to fly above their native mire and fog was but a part of the work that increased upon their hands to an extent which would have daunted less resolute spirits. Hannah's fine sense of humour took the sharpest edge from some of the difficulties that beset them at every turn of the upward road. She relates, without impatience or discouragement, that one rich

farmer, with an income of one thousand pounds a year, informed her brusquely “she need not come to his neighbourhood to make his labourers wiser than himself. He wanted no saints about him, but workmen.” His wife,—of whom Hannah remarks, “’though she cannot read, she seems to understand the doctrine of philosophical necessity,”—told the town ladies that “the lower classes were fated to be poor, and ignorant and wicked,” and howsoever wise the sisters might consider themselves to be, “they could not alter what was decreed.” The husband took up the word and let the interlopers understand that the parish was well enough as it was. If the young men gambled and fought too near his house Sunday evenings, he could always swear at them and order them off. “What could one desire more?”

Some of the thrifty-minded cottagers refused to let their children attend either the Sunday- or day-schools, unless they were paid for it. Others hung back from a fear they were industrious in imparting to others,—namely, that when the seven years were up for which the schoolhouse was

rented, they would find themselves bound to Miss More for a term of servitude beyond the sea. In other words, that she would transport them to a penal colony where they would put into practice for her emolument the knowledge they had acquired under teachers employed by her.

“I must have heard this myself in order to believe that so much ignorance existed out of Africa !” exclaims the anti-slavery woman in mingled amusement and indignation.

Within three years after the opening of the first school in Cheddar, there were twelve hundred children under the care of the mistress of Cowslip Green and her sisters, and ten parishes were included in their round of visitation. This work was done in parishes where there was no resident clergyman, yet so punctilious were the unsalaried missionaries that, before beginning to labour within the bounds of any one of these, they wrote to, or called in person upon, the nominal incumbent of the living to ask his consent to the establishment of schools and cottage visiting. Permission was, in nearly every case,

granted with cheerful indifference which, one would think, might have been more disheartening than open opposition.

The sisters always disclaimed the name of Methodists, yet few Wesleyan circuit-riders were more regular in routine defined by their Conference than these staid Churchwomen in their self-appointed "beat." One school was fifteen miles from Cheddar, and reached by roads so rugged and lonely that they were obliged to take lodgings in the wild district while upon duty there. The novel scheme had passed out of the charmed realm of theory into the severe practice of such lessons of self-denial and endurance as had been, until now, unknown to the brave women. Besides superintending in person all the branches of the work, they instituted a series of cottage prayer-meetings, — Bible-readings, we should call them, — and conducted them regularly. Printed prayers, joined in by all present, a printed sermon read by one of the Misses More, selections from the Scriptures, with a few simple explanations of what was not clear to the unlettered auditors, — formed the order of exercises.

Modern zeal for Sunday-schools, amount-

ing sometimes to a sort of *furore* that makes the offices of the Church unimportant by comparison, has driven out of the zealot's recollection the fact that Robert Raikes's design was, primarily and solely, to provide schools for the children of the poor and ignorant, not for the offspring of Christian parents, who were, presumably, reared from birth in the nurture and admonition of the Lord.

Before the first of her dozen parish schools was six months old, Miss More's genuine good sense perceived what thousands in our favoured land are slow to acknowledge,—to wit, that however faithful the teacher, the instruction received in the Sunday-school is superficial and unsatisfactory without the sure foundation of home-training in holy things. If we would have the fruit good we must look to the tree on which it grows. We may not expect a child to learn a foreign language from hearing it spoken for one, or two, or six hours per week, while for the rest of the time he is allowed to speak his vernacular, and hears nothing else used by those about him.

The dismayed conviction that the stone

she rolled up the Hill Difficulty one Sunday must be heaved up the same height on the next, unless she could counteract the gravitation of daily environment, moved Miss More to the cottage visitations which became an important arm of their service. Parents were invited to the meetings held after Sunday-school ; relief and burial clubs were formed among the women, to which the weekly subscription was three halfpence ; classes were gathered on week-day evenings, where adults were taught to read, and drilled in the precepts of the religion to which they had been for so long strangers. Industrial classes in sewing and knitting were held three times a week. . In a parish where the More sisters found, at their first visit, but one Bible, and that was used to prop a broken flower-pot, Bibles, prayer-books, and hymn books were eagerly coveted as prizes by the end of the third year of the mission-schooling.

Every girl bred in a school and who bore a character for sobriety, modesty, and industry, received upon her wedding-day a Bible, five shillings, and a pair of white stockings. Any member of the women's

club who fell sick was allowed three shillings a week ; a married woman, seven shillings sixpence, weekly, during her confinement.

All these items, with scores of others, Hannah wrote out with her own hand to Mr. Wilberforce and other persons who contributed money to the enterprise. She gave money, time, nerve- and brain-force. In the summer of 1792, she writes to a woman friend :

“ This summer I have had the satisfaction of seeing the first dawn of hope on a subject of great difficulty and delicacy. My young women who were candidates for the bridal presents which I bestow on the virtuous, gravely refused to associate with one who had been guilty of immoral conduct ; whereas it formerly used to afford matter for horrid laughter and disgusting levity.

“ It was a very trying matter to me, for I thought it my duty at one of our late anniversaries in presence of three hundred people, and half-a-dozen of the clergy, to deliver a solemn remonstrance on this very subject. I did not think myself at liberty to be excused, for it was a matter paramount to all misplaced delicacy, and I had the pleasure of witnessing the most becoming gravity and exact decorum in that part of my audience which I most feared. . . . No small difficulty remained to prevent the others from being vain of their virtue, and to convince them that, 'though she had been singularly bad, there was nothing meritorious in their goodness.”

At this time Miss More says, seriously and simply :

“ I have devoted the remnant of my life to the poor, and to those that have no helper ; and if I can do them little good, I can at least sympathise with them, and I know it is some comfort for a forlorn creature to be able to say — ‘ There is somebody that cares for me.’ That simple idea of being cared for has always appeared to me a very cheering one. Besides this, the affection they have for me is a strong engine with which to lift them to the love of higher things, and ’ though I believe others work successfully by terror, yet kindness is the instrument by which God has enabled me to work.

“ Alas ! I might do more and better ! Pray for me that I may.”

The sweet and sincere humility which informs this letter, and was manifest in all she did, did not disarm criticism. She was pained and surprised—when kind words and active benevolence had well-nigh conquered the brutish ignoramuses who had opposed the inception of the reform ; when, as she relates, “ several got warm enough to declare they had no objection to the ladies coming,” and one rich man clapped his hands and declared he “ believed it would turn out a very good job ” ; when

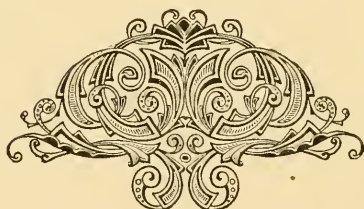
the crooked paths seemed to be straightening and the high places to be levelled—that attack came from other and most unexpected quarters. Sectaries and High-Church bigots were united in dispraise of one who called herself a Churchwoman, yet adopted methodistical modes of carrying the Gospel to the poor. “It is such inconvenience to belong to no party,” she sighs, “and so discreditable is moderation !”

“A high-flier (a friend, too) told me the other day, he would advise me to publish a short confession of my faith, as my attachment both to the religion and the government of the country had become questionable to many persons. I own I was rather glad to hear it, as I was afraid I had leaned too strongly to the other side, and had sometimes gone out of my way to show on which side my bias lay.

“I had not room in my letter to Mrs.— to tell her a true story recently transacted in London. A lady gave a very great children’s ball. At the upper end of the room, in an elevated place was a figure dressed out to represent me, with a large rod in my hand, prepared to punish such naughty doings !”

She gives the mortifying story without comment, but there must have been a painful heart-throb in contrasting the Now of disfavour and contumely with the Then of society and literary honours ; when

coroneted carriages blocked the street before her lodgings, and the great ones of earth vied in chanting her praises. She had chosen the way in which she would walk for "the remnant of her life," and her ways were no more those of her former courtiers than her thoughts were their thoughts.





CHAPTER XII

CHARITABLE MISSIONS IN LONDON—ANSWER TO
M. DUPONT—LORD ORFORD—"VILLAGE POLI-
TICS"—WONDERFUL SUCCESS OF "CHEAP
REPOSITORY TRACTS"

IT was altogether consistent with the changed tenor of Hannah More's career that her London visit of 1792 was upon a charitable errand. A fourteen-year-old heiress, in whom the sisters were much interested, had been decoyed from her home under promise of marriage, and was secreted so cunningly in London that all efforts of Hannah and Patty, aided by Bow Street detectives, failed to find her. Hannah writes to Mrs. Kennicott that her "time is passed with thief-takers, officers of justice and such pretty kind of people," while poor Patty, fairly worn out, fell ill and added to the cares and perplexities of

the situation. Of the victim of a wicked man's arts, Miss More says tearfully, "It was the most timid, gentle, pious little thing !" The unhappy child was hurried to the Continent, and there married to her betrayer.

The ill-success of this errand of mercy did not dissuade Hannah from taking up the cause of a "fine young creature, who had thrown herself into the canal in St. James's Park," in a fit of frenzy induced by the unfaithfulness of her seducer. Miss More and Mrs. Clark, Mr. Wilberforce's sister, sought her in the disorderly house in which she had taken refuge, and did their utmost to save her, carrying her off to a respectable lodging, paying her debts, and watching with her by turns until she contrived to elude their vigilance and elope with a "certain great lawyer who was an infidel."

"I have still some hope !" pronounced the would-be saviour, four years later, in recapitulating the adventure to her sister.

Her optimism was of the hardiest kind, and stood enough tests to crush out and tear up any other type of charity. All the sympathy she could spare from the misery

close under her eyes was given to the victims of the French Revolution, the horrors of which were then engaging the public mind. The oration of Citizen Dupont before the National Assembly of France, December 14, 1792, found admirers even in England, where his watchwords, "Nature and Reason are the gods of men," and the rank blasphemy of the address, were condemned by all bodies of Christians.

At the urgent request of many public men and private friends, and under the impulse of her own indignation at "atheistical speeches which stuck in her throat," Miss More wrote *Remarks on the Speech of M. Dupont made in the National Convention on the subjects of Religion and Public Education*. It had a large sale in England, and the Bishop of Léon caused it to be translated into French. Hannah thought this "lost labour," and the pamphlet itself a "trumpery thing, written for shillings, and not for fame." Every penny she received for it—and it netted over two hundred and forty pounds—was given to the Emigrant French Priests in England.

The best refutation of her depreciation of the work was in the storm of abuse it

brought upon the author from "those whose fondness for French politics blinded them to the horrors of French impiety," and over-zealous Protestants, who accused her of "opposing God's vengeance against Popery by wickedly wishing the French priests should not be starved, when it was God's will that they should," and arraigned her before the Protestant world as "a favourer of the old popish massacres."

She brought her sunny philosophy to bear upon oburgatory pamphlets and speeches :

"I do assure your Lordship," she writes to the Earl of Orford,* who had feared the effect of the onslaught upon her spirits, "that all of them have not given me one minute's uneasiness. Had my adversaries accused me of almost anything but a fondness for bloodshed and popery, I think my conscience might, in some degree, have pleaded guilty, and I might have set about a serious reformation, the proper end of all repentance. However, all censure is profitable. . . . My mind is of such a sort of make that my chief danger lies, not in abuse, but in flattery. It is the slaver that kills—not the bite."

The poisonous "slaver" never corroded the pure metal of her soul. She was ever on the watch lest the beautiful humility she

* Formerly Horace Walpole.



WRINGTON, FROM BRANCHIS CROSS TREE

TRADITION SAYS THE WRINGTON VICTIMS OF JEFFREYS'S "BLOODY ASSIZE" WERE HUNG IN THIS OLD TREE

named self-knowledge might suffer from the adulation thrust upon her.

"I am afraid it is so pleasant to talk of oneself that one would almost rather talk of one's faults than not to talk of one's self at all," is her self-reproof to Lord Orford for "all the egotism" of what makes her letter interesting.

Apropos of Horace Walpole (Lord Orford), someone repeated to Miss More his regret during a severe illness that he "had scolded her for being so religious. I hope she will forgive me!"

As soon as he was well he sent her a Bible, handsomely bound, and a complimentary inscription to herself written upon the fly-leaf.

"When I receive these undue compliments," said Hannah to her sister, "I am ready to answer with my old friend, Johnson — 'Sir! I am a miserable sinner!'"

The versatile pen that wrote the political pamphlet in reply to Dupont, was at the same time busy upon the first of the *Cheap Repository Tracts*. This new and extraordinary departure from any of the lines of work in which Miss More had earned fame and fortune was, as she always believed in

her simple and powerful faith, a direct inspiration from a higher source than man's judgment. She had been importuned to write in popular style an answer to Thomas Paine's *Rights of Man* and other tracts in a similar vein, which were circulating freely among the English peasantry. The idea did not commend itself to Miss More at first. She had not the knack of writing for the common people, she said, and if she had, who, among those for whom the book was intended, would read it? The commendation of their superiors in education and station would avail nothing with the discontented poor, —and so much more to the same purpose that her friends gave over the attempt to persuade her. Pondering the matter in solitude, the whole scheme and dialogue of *Village Politics by Will Chip* came to her. She sat down, forthwith, and finished the tract before leaving her desk.

A third time she sent a book anonymously into the world, now changing her publisher, lest Cadell's connection with it might be a clue to the authorship. Within a month the editions ran into the hundred thousands; even the King read it, and

expressed his delight openly ; dozens of copies were presented to Miss More, with warm recommendations to her to read that which she might and ought to have done, and what, it was hoped, would move her to imitation.

Our old acquaintance, Bishop Porteous, of London, had been taken into Hannah's confidence. In fact, he was one of those who had pressed the task upon her.

“ In an evil hour, against my will and my judgment, one sick day, I scribbled the little pamphlet, and the very next morning after I had first conceived the idea, sent it off to Rivington,” — is Hannah's story of the birth of the foundling.

Roberts says: “ The tact and intelligence of a single female ” (we wish he could have dropped the obnoxious adjective !) “ wielded at will the ‘ fierce democratie of England,’ and stemmed the tide of misguided opinion. Many persons of the soundest judgment went so far as to affirm that it had essentially contributed under Providence to prevent a revolution.”

More to our taste is the Bishop of London's letter to his friend and fellow-conspirator :

“ MY DEAR MRS. CHIP :

“ I have this moment received your husband's *Dialogue*, and it is supremely excellent. I look upon Mr. Chip as one of the finest writers of the age. This work, alone, will immortalise him, and, what is better still, I trust it will help to immortalise the Constitution. If the sale is as rapid as the book is good, Mr. Chip will get an immense fortune and completely destroy all equality at once. How Jack Anvil and Tom Hod will bear this I know not, but I rejoice at Mr. Chip's elevation, and should be extremely glad at this moment to shake him by the hand, and ask him to take a family dinner with me. He is really a very fine fellow.”

Better than all the praises of the upper classes was the fact that *Will Chip* was read in smithies, in pot-houses, and at cotters' firesides, often aloud to a gaping crowd who, for the first time, heard the politics of the day elucidated in nervous English, so simple that a child or unlettered plough-boy could understand the drift of each speaker's argument. As, for instance, when Jack Anvil defined French liberty to be “ To murder more men in one night than the poor king did in all his life,” and a democrat as “ One who likes to be governed by a thousand tyrants, and yet can't bear a king.” Equality, for which the French mob was flooding Paris with blood,

was said by the village Conservative to be, “For every man to put down everyone that is above him,” and the Rights of Man, as interpreted by the “free” *canaille*, to be “Battle, murder and sudden death.”

“These poor French fellows,” says Jack, “used to be the merriest dogs in the world, but since Equality came in I don’t believe a Frenchman has ever laughed.”

When the same reasoner has proved the folly of his malcontents’ Agrarian theory, Tom doggedly asserts, “But still I should have no one over my head.”

“That’s a mistake !” retorts Jack. “I’m stronger than thee, and Standish, the exciseman, is a better scholar. We should not remain equal a minute.”

The twelve hundred children in the Mendip schools devoured the *Dialogue* and talked of it in their homes ; clergymen distributed hundreds of copies in their parishes. In at least one town Tom Paine was burned in effigy, and his book tossed into the flames with him.

Under the stimulus of the amazing result brought to pass by the work of that “one sick day,” the More sisters determined to write and publish at least three tracts a year

after the same order, — “stories, ballads and religious readings,”—at a price that would oust the revolutionary trash which was the only literary food of the people besides “ballads and broadsheets of the last dying speeches” of criminals, and half-penny songs of the vilest kind. These *Cheap Repository Tracts* are now classics, an apotheosis never anticipated by those who wrote them, or the philanthropists who bore, with the sisters, the cost of publication and distribution. Foremost among these were the Bishop of London and William Wilberforce, but a Royal Duke was a contributor to the fund and a warm well-wisher to the project. As its success became apparent, a committee, the chairman of which was Archbishop Moore, was formed in London to enlarge the circulation of the *Tracts* and to bear the major part of the expense.

One of Hannah’s ballads, *The Riot*, averted the destruction of valuable mills and private houses near Bath. The colliers “struck,” and inflamed the other labouring classes until a bloody riot was imminent. Hundreds of copies of the ballad were strewed broadcast through the district,

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sung by the school-children, and in the public houses, until reason and temperate counsels got the upper hand of turbulence.

“ A fresh proof by what weak instruments evils are, now and then, prevented ! ” observed Hannah, when this was reported to her.

Of another ballad, *Turn the Carpet*, Bishop Porteous said : “ Here you have Bishop Butler’s *Analogy* — all for a half-penny ! ”

The particular passage to which he referred runs thus :

“ This world, which clouds thy soul with doubt,
Is but a carpet inside out.
As when we view these shreds and ends,
We know not what the whole intends,
So, when on earth things look but odd
They ’re working out some scheme for God.
What now seem random strokes, will, there,
In order and design appear.
Then shall we praise what here we spurned ;
For then the carpet shall be turned.”

Black Giles the Poacher, comprising the story of Tawny Rachel, his wife, was objected to by Dr. Christopher Wordsworth, brother of the poet, and afterwards Master of Trinity, as “ novelish and exciting,” a

stricture he extended to other of the series. The popular taste found, in one and all, innocent stimulus for the imagination, so blended with excellent moral teachings that the one could not be had without imbibing the other. One of the best of these tracts was *Parley the Porter*, which some hasty critics have attributed to Bunyan.

The pearl of the series, as all agree, was the inimitable *Shepherd of Salisbury Plain*. Miss Yonge calls it, aptly and prettily, “an idyl of religious content and frugality.”





CHAPTER XIII

TILT WITH LORD ORFORD—MORE TRACTS—
GLIMPSE OF FANNY BURNEY—LORD ORFORD'S
DEATH AND HIS MEMOIRS

TWO millions of the *Cheap Repository Tracts* were sold in one year. For three years Hannah More, with occasional assistance from her sister Sally,—who was the best writer of her four coadjutors,—prepared three tracts annually, superintended her growing schools and societies, embracing now nearly seventeen hundred women and children, and conducted personally the immense correspondence involved in her several charitable and literary enterprises, besides writing many other letters to friends in all parts of the United Kingdom and upon the Continent. The excruciating headaches became more frequent, and in other ways her delicate

physique betrayed the strain upon her forces, but the indomitable spirit held its own; her rare gift of humour solaced many a weary hour, tempered many an annoyance. Her intimacy and friendly passages at arms with Lord Orford were the same as of old. They seldom met without an encounter of opinions and wits. The following is a sample of their tilts :

“Lord Orford rallied me, yesterday, for what he called ‘the ill-natured strictness of my *Tracts*.’ He talked foolishly enough of ‘the cruelty of making the poor spend so much time in reading books and depriving them of their pleasure on Sundays.’

“In return, I recommended him and the ladies present to read *Law’s Serious Call*. I told them it was a book their favourite Mr. Gibbon had highly praised, and, moreover, that Law had been Gibbon’s tutor early in life. (Both are true, but was there ever such a contrast between preceptor and pupil?) They have promised to read it and I know they will be less afraid of Gibbon’s recommendation than of mine.”

To John Newton she explains, solicitously, that, in view of the dissemination of asses’ loads of pernicious pamphlets, in cottages, by the highways, and at the mouths of mines and coal-pits, she has

“thought it lawful to write a few moral stories, the main circumstances of which had occurred within her

own knowledge . . . carefully observing to found all goodness on religious principles.

“Some strict people, perhaps, will think that invention should have been entirely excluded ; but, alas ! I know with whom I have to deal, and I hope I may thus allure these thoughtless creatures to higher things.”

John Newton was a frequent guest at Cowslip Green, and heartily in sympathy with the mission-school innovations. After one of his visits he left a string of atrocious doggerel behind him, for which, nevertheless, we love him better than for the sermonical epistles which Hannah found edifying :

“In Helicon could I my pen dip,
I would attempt the praise of Mendip.
Were bards a hundred I 'd outstrip them,
If equal to the theme of Shiphams ;
But harder still the task I 'd ween
To give its due to Cowslip Green.”

In 1793, Miss More tells Mrs. Boscawen of the leading tract for the coming month — *The Way to Plenty*, containing a number of recipes for cheap, nourishing dishes, such as the cottage housewife could prepare for her family at less cost than the wretched victuals she was accustomed to set before them. Newspapers and private

letters had called upon her for something of the sort. She was the established authority upon every subject with thousands of the poor all over England. They would listen to whatever she had to say. Would she not try to teach them the small economies by which they might better their ways of living?

“It is not a very brilliant career,” she confesses to her old friend. “But I feel that the value of a thing lies so much more in its usefulness than its splendour that I have a notion I should derive more gratification from being able to lower the price of bread than from having written *The Iliad*.”

The very next sentence gives us a hasty glimpse of Fanny Burney, now Madame d’Arblay. She had married a French refugee, and was anxious to eke out their scanty income by a return to her long-disused profession.

“But let me not forget to do homage to real talents, for which I still retain something of my ancient kindness. I therefore wish it were in my power to offer ten subscriptions to Miss Burney (I always forget her French name !) instead of one, for which I take the liberty to request the favour of your setting down my name.”

How far off must the brilliant career each had known in the other’s company have

seemed to the earnest-souled philanthropist as she wrote "little Burney's" name in this connection ! There is even a touch of formality, almost embarrassment, in Hannah's manner of making the subscription, as if she struggled with rising memories. And she "still retains something of her ancient kindness for the real talents" of the half-forgotten celebrity whose sphere of thought and action was not more utterly changed from what it was in the day of Garrick, Johnson, and the Thrales, than was Hannah's own.

In 1795, Miss More writes to a serious-minded correspondent whose name we do not know :

"I think I have done with the aristocracy. I am no longer a debtor to the Greeks, but I am so to my poor barbarians."

The name is justified by what she relates of the moral and religious status of her constituents in a region which "had helped to people the county gaol and Botany Bay, beyond any other that she knew." To spare the pride of farmers, who were as ignorant as their labourers, she hit upon the plan of forming private evening classes

for them. These were well attended, the men bringing their wives with them. She and faithful Patty were unremitting in visitations far and near, driving across the country when the nature of the ground allowed them to do so, walking when they reached a point beyond which a carriage could not go.

In 1796, she writes to Patty from Fulham Palace, where she was making a brief visit :

“While you are labouring in your Sunday missions I am idling my time with Lords and Commoners. . . . Did I ever tell you of the satisfaction Mr. Pitt expressed one day about our tracts? He said he had just heard that forty thousand had been sent to America, and ‘he had not met with anything in a long time that had pleased him more than that such sort of reading was gaining ground in this country.’”

She is more deeply moved by this news than by a four-hours’ *tête-à-tête* with Lady Waldegrave, who had called expressly to see her. Old things had passed away, and for all time.

We are reminded here of Wilberforce’s speech to an acquaintance a few years before his death in 1833, that he “would rather present himself in Heaven with *The Shepherd of Salisbury Plain* in his hand

than with *Peveril of the Peak*.' As this one of Scott's novels was not published until 1823, the anecdote is in evidence of the continued popularity of the idyllic tract in the author's old age, thirty years after it was written.

For the period lying between 1794-97, she wrote little for the press except these tracts and ballads. In England and in America they were found in every library that contained religious literature for the home, and, after the establishment of Sunday-school libraries, *The Shepherd of Salisbury Plain* and *Parley the Porter* were kept in brisk circulation by childish lovers of stories with plenty of local colour and action in them.

Personal sorrow followed hard after literary triumphs. In the spring of 1797, Edmund Burke died, and also Lord Orford. Miss More was sensibly afflicted by the death of the latter. As she says to her sister Patty :

" Twenty years' unclouded kindness and pleasant correspondence cannot be given up without emotion. I am not sorry now that I never flinched from his ridicule, or attacks, or suffered them to pass without rebuke. His playful wit, his various knowledge, his

polished manners — alas ! what avail they now ? The most serious thoughts are awakened. Oh, that he had known and believed the things that belonged to his peace ! My heart is much oppressed with the reflection.”

Lord Orford's executors applied to her for such of his letters to her as she was willing to have published, and returned to her all of those she had written to the deceased peer. He had carefully preserved every one. In the handsome collection of his works published the next year, his letters to Miss More appeared — “the only living correspondent to whom any of the letters were addressed.” She tells a funny story of “tumbling over the leaves” of the volumes in company with the Bishop of London, and happening unexpectedly upon her own portrait — “hideous picture !” she calls it. This was at the Duchess of Gloucester's. Miss More was surprised and gratified, a few days afterwards, by receiving from Miss Berry a copy of the “ memorial of our late friend.” She adds, “I did not at all expect such a compliment.”

It seems natural, and even inevitable, to us.



CHAPTER XIV

ORGANISED OPPOSITION TO SCHOOLS—BLAGDEN SCHOOL CLOSED—LETTER TO AND FROM THE BISHOP OF BATH—BUILDING OF BARLEY WOOD—THE PRINCESS CHARLOTTE—SEVERE ILLNESS—DEATH OF DR. PORTEUS

IT does not appear natural—it ought surely to have been evitable by some human and humane agency—that Mr. Wilberforce, taking his bride to visit his dear friends at Cowslip Green, should have found the state of affairs depicted in Hannah's letters of the summer of 1798.

In after years, she thus condensed the disgraceful scenes, the enacting of which required months and years, in a confidential communication to Sir W. W. Pepys, her ancient and sympathising ally :

“Two Jacobin and infidel curates, poor and ambitious, formed the design of attracting notice and getting

preferment by attacking some charity schools (which, with no small labour, I have carried on in this county for near twenty years) as 'seminaries of vice, sedition and revolution.' It will make you smile when I tell you a few of the charges brought against me,—viz. that I hired two men to assassinate one of these clergymen ;—that I was actually taken up for seditious practices ;—that I was with Hadfield in his attack upon the King's life. One of them strongly insinuated this from the pulpit, and then caused the newspaper which related the attack, to be read at the church-door. At the same time—mark the consistency ! they declared that I was in the pay of Mr. Pitt, and the grand instigator (poor I !) of the war, by mischievous pamphlets,—and, to crown the whole,—that I was concerned with Charlotte Corday in the murder of Marat ! ! !

"That wicked and needy men should invent this is not so strange as that they should have found magazines, reviews and pamphleteers to support them. My declared resolution never to defend myself certainly encouraged them to go on. Yet how thankful am I that I kept that resolution ! though the grief and astonishment excited by this combination nearly cost me my life."

An entry in a private diary seen by no eyes but hers until after her death, records of August 13, 1798 :

"After two days' severe headache, fell down in a violent fit—dashed my face against the wall, and lay long, seemingly dead—much bruised and disfigured. Have lain by above a fortnight, almost useless from violent pains in my head and loss of sleep. I have lost

all the time from my book, and have redeemed too little of it by serious thought. Oh ! for that happy state where is neither sorrow nor crying ! ”

The heroic soul was sorely bestead ; the silver cord tense to breaking. With affectionate violence Mr. Wilberforce interfered to prevent an utter wreck, and took her away with himself and his wife to Bath, despite Hannah's protest against “ leaving poor Patty to work double tides.”

Returning from the much-needed vacation after two months' absence, she fell to work, although still far from well, upon the interrupted “ book.” It appeared early in 1799 under the title, *Strictures on Female Education*. It was warmly, if not rapturously, received by those whose opinions she valued most highly, and met with many amusing comments in the higher walks of life where dwelt those for whose edification it was written. Much of it, as Miss Yonge observes, amusedly, is as applicable to the schoolgirl of to-day as to that of the eighteenth century, notably the chapters upon exaggerated language and upon “ Baby Balls.”

The modern publisher would rate as “ a first-class ad.” for the work, that Peter

Pindar took exception to her reference to the harm done the youthful mind by unpurgated editions of the poets, and that the Bishop of London stigmatised Peter Pindar's attack upon his friend Miss More, as "a piece of gross and coarse ribaldry, rancour and profaneness." The *Anti-Jacobin Review* also forwarded the sales of the book by describing revolutionary tendencies in certain portions, and an archdeacon criticised three chapters as decidedly too Calvinistic for a Churchwoman's writing.

As Hannah had said, years before, "It is such an inconvenience to belong to no party, and so discreditable is moderation !"

Emboldened by her consistent adherence to her principle of non-combativeness, rich and ignorant farmers, superstitious hinds, led by more cunning rogues, Socinian schismatics, godless and pugnacious curates, led on the opposition to one system of charities established by her, known as the Blagden schools, until, by the advice of the aged, and hence timid, Bishop of Bath and Wells (Dr. Moss), the mission at Blagden was given up. Miss — or as she was called after she passed her fiftieth birthday, "Mrs." — More wrote a letter of twenty

pages to Dr. Beadon, the successor of Dr. Moss, which is one of the most able productions ever submitted to ecclesiastical powers that be. In clearness and force of style, in graphic statement of the simple facts in the vexed case, and in eloquent vindication of the motives and conduct of her coadjutors, first, herself, last, — it rises to the dignity of a state document. Such feeling as throbs beneath the studied moderation of every sentence never informed a state paper. A perusal of it — and there is not one dull paragraph in the whole — helps us to understand the tremendous effect produced by her treatise on the *Manners of the Great* and by *The Estimate*.

We are left in no doubt as to the influence of her epistle upon Bishop Beadon.

“I wanted no declaration, or evidence, of either your faith or your patriotism,” he avers, “more than what may be derived from your numerous and avowed publications, and I can only say that if you are not a sincere and zealous friend to the Constitutional Establishment, both in Church and State, you are one of the greatest hypocrites, as well as one of the best writers in his Majesty’s dominions.”

He closes his letter by assuring her of his desire that her

“remaining schools” should be maintained, “and as long as they continue to be under the inspection and guidance of yourself and the several parochial ministers where they are established, you may assure yourself they will have my protection and every encouragement I can give them.”

Nevertheless, the persecution for righteousness’ sake went on. The Bishop’s letter was written in 1801, and a few months later in the same year, the farmers at Wedmore, a “peculiar parish,” where there was no resident clergyman, and over which the Bishop thought he had no jurisdiction, issued a formal writ against the Misses More “for teaching the poor without a license.”

“In Blagden” — Mrs. More writes—“is still ‘a voice heard, lamentation and mourning,’ and at Cowslip Green Rachel is still ‘weeping for her children, and refuses to be comforted because they are not’ instructed. This heavy blow has almost bowed me to the ground.”

It is a comfort to us to learn that the Bishop of London continued to be her leal supporter and exerted all his influence to shield and sustain her; that Bishop Barrington of Durham espoused her cause manfully; that the good and great Robert Cecil wrote long letters full of sympathy

and brotherly counsel, and that articles were published in her defence by nine prominent clergymen.

Yet the air was thick with scandals of the vilest import set on foot by anti-Jacobin pamphleteers, and caught up and multiplied by lewd fellows of the baser sort in pot-house and slums. In her letter to Pepys, Mrs. More enumerated several which she considered most preposterous. She speaks to Mr. Wilberforce of one which must have annoyed her by its extreme absurdity and by the very nature of the calumny directed against a woman of threescore. A scurrilous pamphlet, circulated and laughed over in her own county, affirmed that she was encouraging and receiving three lovers at once, an actor and two officers in the Royal army !

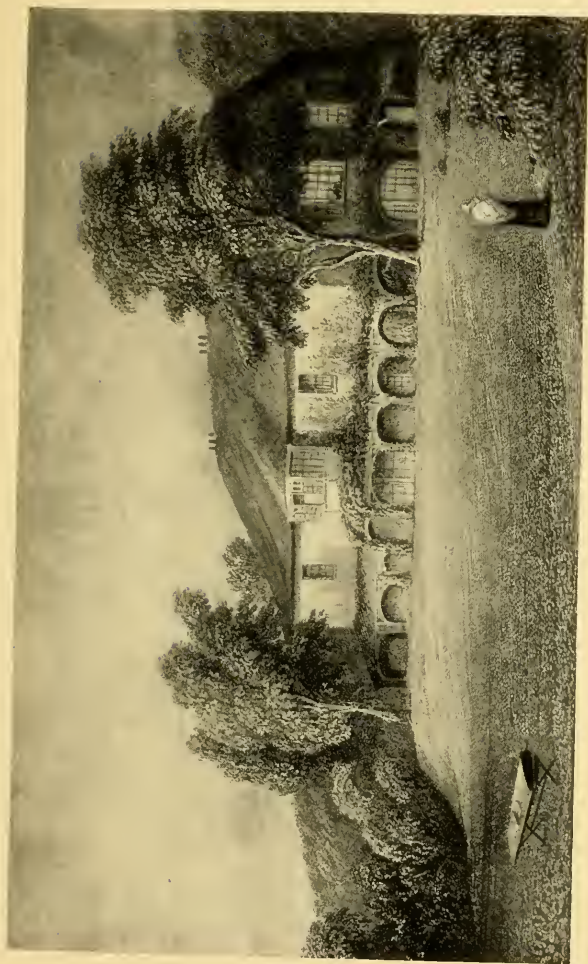
The one phrase that betokens how such darts had rusted into and inflamed her soul attributes the persecution "in great part to the defenceless state of her sex."

In the course of time the waves foamed out their own shame upon ears that had grown weary with listening, but the tempest had lasted long enough to exhaust the innocent object of its fury.

In answer to a pressing invitation from a London friend in 1802 to seek refuge with the faithful band whose love had never grown cold, and who were prepared to welcome her with all the old-time warmth, Mrs. More replies :

“Battered, hacked, scalped and tomahawked as I have been for three years, and continue to be, brought out every month as an object of scorn and abhorrence, I seem to have nothing to do in the world. . . . From long habit it will seem odd, after never having once omitted going to London for thirty years, to discontinue it, but I think I am right. I have, in that long period, been spoiled for ordinary society, but I am not as nice as I used to be.”

This is the one touch of morbidity we find in all her voluminous correspondence, and her friends, especially her devoted sisters, set themselves zealously to work to dispel the rising cloud. A most opportune diversion was brought about in the form of a proposition to give up the summer cottage at Cowslip Green, also the house at Bath, and to build upon a piece of ground the five sisters owned in Wrington a home sufficiently commodious to hold them all, where they might live the year round.



BARLEY WOOD, SOMERSETSHIRE

AS IT WAS DURING HANNAH MORE'S RESIDENCE THERE

Thus began the residence at Barley Wood, a name associated with that of Hannah More the world over. She rallied bodily powers and cheerfulness in the congenial task of building, furnishing, and landscape gardening, but full restoration of the normal tone of nerves and spirit was gradual. In 1804, she regrets that her "nerves are far from being sufficiently strong" to allow her to write.

"I have acquired such a dislike to it that I hesitate and procrastinate for days even when I have nothing but a common letter to write. I used to defy mere pain and sickness, and found little difference when anything was to be written, whether I was ill or well, but the late disorders of my body have introduced new disorders into my mind — listlessness and inapplication (two words of which before I hardly knew the meaning)."

It was, therefore, a signal victory over physical and mental "disorders" when she again put pen to paper. In response to the earnest request of the Queen, conveyed through an "eminent dignitary of the Church," she wrote (1805) *Hints towards Forming the Character of a Young Princess*. The baby Princess Charlotte of Wales was the heiress-apparent to the throne, an engaging little being whom

kindred and courtiers conspired to spoil. Mrs. More had once (in 1799) passed the morning with her at Carlton House, and described her to her sisters, as

“ the most sensible and genteel little creature you could wish to see. Her understanding is so forward that they really might begin to teach her many things. It is, perhaps, the highest praise, after all, to say that she is exactly like the child of a private gentleman ; wild and natural, but sensible, lively and civil.”

The reminiscence doubtless had some influence in moving her to obedience to what from Royalty had the form of a command. Her one stipulation was that the book should appear without her name, and she tactfully and deferentially dedicated it to Dr. Fisher, then Bishop of Exeter, afterward of Salisbury, who had been lately appointed as preceptor to the Princess. Mrs. More had hesitated, as she gave the Bishop to understand, to complete her half-finished work after this appointment was made, for fear that “ it might be deemed intrusive and superfluous to interfere in a vocation which had now been authoritatively confided to a learned and able man.”

The Bishop thanked her in a letter addressed to one he supposed to be of his

own sex, and, when undeceived by the public verdict upon the internal evidence of the treatise, expressed himself as honoured by the opportunity of making the acquaintance of an author he had long admired and esteemed. The Queen graciously bestowed upon the *Hints* her "warm commendations." The author begged Lady Waldegrave to "say with truth in speaking of it, that 'though written for royalty, it was meant to be useful to all young persons of rank and liberal education."

Miss Yonge says with shrewd humour :

"On the whole it may be feared that these *Hints* proved about as useful to poor Princess Charlotte as Bossuet's work, *In usum Delphini*, to the Grand Dauphin. But the loyal Hannah remained in happy ignorance of how father, mother and grandmother contended over the high-spirited girl who, meanwhile, under Lady Albemarle's easy rule, laughed at Bishop Fisher, and ran wild with George Keppel."

From 1806 to 1808, loyal Hannah's immediate personal interests were confined to the space enclosed by the four walls of her sick-room. In returning from one of her schools on a stormy day, she took cold, and a pleuritic fever supervened upon the first symptoms. For many months this

kept an intermittent form, baffling the physicians and reducing the patient to such weakness that her sisters for a while despaired of her recovery. During all this time the work so dear to her heart was carried on, to the best of her ability, by the devoted Patty ; the memory of the founder was cherished in the schools, and the cottagers within an area of twenty miles about Cowslip Green and Barley Wood talked of and prayed for their suffering benefactress.

It was a notable and joyous event when she made her first appearance in public after her illness—convalescent, if not cured—at the twentieth anniversary of the foundation of the Cheddar schools, the most flourishing in the system she had established. By 1809, she was enjoying her usual health,—reading and commenting upon *The Lay of the Last Minstrel* and *Corinne*, interested in two learned works, sent to her by the authors, both of whom were Bristol clergymen, and in the full flood of correspondence with Sir W. W. Pepys, Wilberforce, Mrs. Kennicott, and others of the old circle of intimates. A sad break in this was made by the death of Dr.

Porteus, the Bishop of London, in the seventy-eighth year of his age. He had paid a visit to Barley Wood earlier in the spring, and, although feeling the infirmity of his years, was happy and companionable in the society of his much-loved friend.

His last public service, as Mrs. Kennicott wrote to Mrs. More, was to wait upon the Prince Regent with a petition that he would alter the date set for the meeting of a club established under the patronage of His Royal Highness. It was to be held on Sunday, and the venerable prelate, "with agitated earnestness, conjured him to fix on some other day. . . . The Prince received him most graciously, seemed much affected, and granted his request."

"I honour him more for this difficult exertion of piety than for a hundred acts of charity," observes Hannah. "They were a gratification to his nature, but this was a triumph over his naturally timid and modest nature. . . . Full of days, of honours, and of virtues, his death was without a pang, and he may literally be said to have fallen asleep."

Among her most carefully preserved papers was a note of two lines, the last he ever wrote to her. He had, a few days earlier, asked her prayers "in a time of

much difficulty and distress," the nature of which he did not define.

The second note ran :

"My dear Mrs. More :

"Prayer has had its usual effect, and all is now perfectly right."

After his death, Mrs. More knew that the "difficulty and distress" were in anticipation of his delicate mission to the Prince of Wales. He left her a legacy of one hundred pounds. In conformity with a sentimental fashion of her times, she erected in a copse upon the Barley Wood grounds an urn, inscribed :

"To Beilby Porteus, late Lord Bishop of London, in memory of long and faithful friendship."





CHAPTER XV

“CÆLEBS IN SEARCH OF A WIFE”—MACAULAY’S
BOYHOOD—INTIMACY WITH HANNAH MORE
—“PRACTICAL PIETY”—DEATH OF MARY
MORE—FÊTE AT BARLEY WOOD—DEATHS OF
ELIZABETH AND SALLY MORE—VISITORS TO
BARLEY WOOD—THE HOUSE LEFT DESOLATE

HANNAH MORE’S only novel, *Cælebs in Search of a Wife*, in two octavo volumes, was published in December, 1809, without the author’s name.

The plot is slender and the *motif* trite, but the story took amazingly with evangelical people who had scruples as to reading the average romance of the day. Miss Yonge covers this ground when she tells us :

“To those more seriously disposed persons who barely tolerated fiction of any sort, *Cælebs*, with its really able sketches

of character and epigrammatic turns, was genuinely entertaining and delightful."

Pious mothers put it into their daughters' hands and pressed the perusal of it upon their sons. Sydney Smith scarified it in the *Edinburgh Review*, making the priggish hero and the impeccable heroine the jest of polite circles. Another reviewer took the novel in deadly seriousness. Richard Cumberland was a playwright of some note, the author of a comedy, *The West Indian*, an heroic drama, *The Battle of Hastings*, and a poem, *Calvary, or the Death of Christ*, in eight books. He fell upon *Cælebs* with violence disproportionate to the cause ; talked of the author's "suckling babes of grace," and declared the volumes to be no better than a "decoction of hell-broth" ; warned the clergy against a book which was designed to subvert churchly ordinances, since "deepest mischiefs lurked in every page of *Cælebs*, and as the book was already in many hands, he felt it his duty to say "*Caveat emptor!*"

"Alas for poor human nature," writes Hannah, "that he has not forgiven, at the end of thirty years, that in my gay and youthful days a tragedy of mine [*Percy*]



BARLEY WOOD, AS IT NOW IS

HANNAH MORE'S OWN ROOMS WERE IN THE "BAY" AT THE LEFT OF PICTURE

was preferred to one of his”—*The Battle of Hastings*— “which, perhaps, better deserved success.”

The Roman Catholic Vicar-General of England took exception to certain strictures upon “Popish observances,” and wrote to the anonymous author on the subject, courteously but earnestly. Hannah replied with equal courtesy, defending her position, but expressing her esteem for many writers and preachers of his communion, notably Bossuet, Massillon, Bourdaloue, Francis de Sales, and Pascal.

“I am too zealous in my own faith,” she says, “not to admire zeal in the opposite party.”

In spite of adverse criticism—perhaps partly because of it—the book ran through twelve editions in as many months in England, and had a still livelier sale in America. Thirty American editions appeared during the author’s lifetime. A new edition would now be a curiosity. The profits of the English editions to Mrs. More, within a year after the day of publication, were two thousand pounds.

Cœlebs is interesting to us, chiefly on account of its connection with Thomas

Babington Macaulay, who, with his sister, was supposed to have furnished the models of the Stanley children. Macaulay's mother was a former and favourite pupil of the More sisters in Bristol, and her friendship with them was continued after her marriage to Zachary Macaulay, the eminent philanthropist and close friend of William Wilberforce. Mr. Wilberforce introduced Mr. Macaulay to the Barley Wood household, in which Miss Mills — his future wife — was a visitor. A mutual attachment and betrothal followed. The Macaulays lived at Clapham, and Hannah More's first meeting with Thomas was during the last winter she passed in London. Calling upon Mrs. Macaulay, she was received by a quaint four-year-old boy, who regretted that his mother was not at home,—

“But if you will be so good as to come in and sit down, I will give you a glass of fine old spirits.”

When his mother asked him afterwards why he had made such an offer to a lady, he answered that Robinson Crusoe always drank old spirits, and he supposed it was the right thing to do.

From that day Hannah More took him

into peculiar favour, keeping him with her for weeks together, hearing him "read prose by the ell, and declaim poetry by the hour," discussing heroes admired by them both—"ancient, modern, and fictitious,"—reading the Bible aloud to him, and arguing theological points raised by him while the reading went on. They worked together in the garden, and studied botany there; the hostess gave him cooking lessons to wile him from too close application to his books, and hearkened indulgently to his literary projects, already many and ambitious. How heartily she entered into the pursuits and dreams of a childhood which recalled her own, we gather from her letters to her grave-eyed baby knight.

"Though you are a little boy now, you will, one day, if it please God, be a man, but long before you are a man I hope you will be a scholar," she wrote when he was six years old.

And at seven he had these suggestions :

"I think we have nearly exhausted the Epics. What say you to a little good prose,—*Johnson's Hebrides*, or *Walton's Lives*,—unless you would like a neat edition of *Cowper's Poems* or *Paradise Lost*, for your own eating? I want you to become a complete Frenchman,

that I may give you the works of Racine, the only dramatic poet I know in any language that is perfectly pure and good."

This is entirely in keeping with the prim declaration of "Lucilla's" little sister who, upon her seventh birthday, gives up "all her gift books with pictures," and upon her eighth, her "little story-books."

"Now,"—she announces, "I am going to read such books as men and women read."

We read it with a shuddering laugh—but a Hannah More and a Macaulay were respectable products of a system of education that allowed a child to browse at will in a well-chosen library of "men's and women's books."

Practical Piety, published in 1811, bore Mrs. More's own name. Ten editions were called for within a few months.

"My expectations from it were low," Hannah confesses to Sir W. W. Pepys. "It is nothing to the public that it was written in constant pain, and it is the worst of all apologies that it was done in such a hurry that it was very little longer in writing than in printing. But life is short. Mine is particularly uncertain, and I had persuaded myself that it was better to bring it out in a defective state than not at all."

Under the same solemn conviction that her working days were (at sixty-eight) nearly over, she penned a sequel to *Practical Piety* in 1813, which she entitled *Christian Morals*. The subject grew upon her as she wrote until the work extended to two volumes. She regarded these as her "last words," and in saying as much to Mrs. Kennicott, quotes Cato's

"While yet I live, let me not live in vain !"

Two years before, she had described to the same attached friend a visit she had paid to some friends near Bristol, where she had been "rubbing up some of the friendships" of her early youth.

"I have been visiting, with a soothing sort of feeling, the scenes where we used to gypsey, and traced many a spot where I had picked dry sticks to boil the tea-kettle under a shady oak, or broiled mutton chops on knitting needles.

"The companions of these harmless rambles are all dead, while our sickly family are all alive."

The first of the five sisters to die was the eldest, Mary. Her declining strength had been the cause of sorrowful solicitude to the others for some months past. From her twentieth year she had taught in the

school she had founded, without the intermission of one term, until her retirement at the age of fifty-two. The residence at Barley Wood was not inaction. Her share in the charitable labours of Hannah and Patty was not inconsiderable, and she remained to the last the referee in all domestic and business matters, the strong staff and beautiful rod upon which the others leaned.

Her end was as peaceful as her life had been benignant. Surrounded by those who loved her best, she breathed her last on Easter morning, April 20, 1813.

“I thought it something blessed to die on Easter Sunday—to descend to the grave on the day when Jesus triumphed over it,” wrote Hannah to a friend. “I am dividing my morning between contemplation of her serene countenance and in reading my favourite *Baxter’s Saints’ Rest*.”

In July Hannah made a farewell visit to several places endeared to her by memories of those who had gone, and by associations with former joys,—Strawberry Hill, Kensington Gore (the home of the Wilberforces), and Mrs. Garrick’s residence at Hampton, being among these. She was on her way to the country-seat of a dear old friend,

Lord Barham, when the news of his sudden death arrested her. Those were sad pilgrimages and the times were solemn. Hannah was far from well, Patty's health was becoming infirm, and the shadow of their recent loss rested upon heart and home.

"Yet we are still, except in severe weather, able to attend our schools," records the heroic worker. "We keep up about seven hundred children, besides receiving the parents who attend in the evening. Our teachers were mostly bred up by ourselves, so that our plans are pretty well maintained."

She was busy with an *Essay on the Character and Practical Writings of Saint Paul*, and writing an additional scene for her sacred drama of *Moses*, when an accident nearly cost her her life. Her shawl caught fire as she was passing the grate, and before she could give the alarm she was apparently wrapped in flames. The presence of mind of Miss Roberts, a visitor, who threw Hannah upon the carpet as if she had been an infant, and with her bare hands tore off the blazing garments, saved her from a horrible death.

The *Essay on Saint Paul* was published in 1815 — when the author entered her

seventy-first year. "The night cometh!" was her watchword from month to month, and day to day. She must work while her waning day lasted. A short but alarming visitation of ophthalmia, which kept her in a dark room and idle, so far as eyes and hands went, was accepted as an additional warning of the brevity of life and the fewness of her remaining opportunities of active usefulness.

Yet in 1816, we see her the principal figure in a gathering in the beautiful grounds of Barley Wood to celebrate the formation of a branch Bible Society in the parish of Wrington. Nearly forty clergymen were present at the religious exercises, which were held in a waggon-yard, as the only place in the neighbourhood which would hold the convocation of people of all classes.

"So," says Hannah, complacently to Mr. Wilberforce, "the Archdeacon cannot plant us in his 'hot-bed of heresy and schism.'"

One hundred and one dined at Barley Wood, and about one hundred and sixty took tea within the hospitable doors and under the trees on the lawn, the day being remarkably fine.



WRINGTON GREEN

Deaths of Elizabeth and Sally 211

“It had all the gayety of a public garden,” continued Hannah, and excuses the expense (twenty pounds) by representing that “many young persons of fortune present, by assisting at this little festivity, will learn to connect the idea of innocent cheerfulness with that of religious societies, and may ‘go and do likewise.’ For no other cause on earth would we encounter the fatigue.”

Not one of the quartette could afford to take risks in the matter of health that summer. Elizabeth, the eldest of the band, was partially paralysed and bedridden. In June, mortification in one leg, probably the result of an embolism, ensued, and she lay without the power to articulate or to swallow, partially unconscious of the agonising queries of her affectionate nurses, until death released her from her sufferings. She had been the housekeeper in Bristol, in Bath, and, latterly, at Barley Wood, and her loss was felt the more keenly because her tender heart had responded so readily to the bodily needs detected by her quick eye and womanly intuition, that those to whom she ministered were never fully aware how much she had done, and how well, until the place that once knew her was for ever vacant. She was sadly needed just then. Sally was ill with a distressing

dropsical affection, the lively Patty, Hannah's right-hand woman, had a disease of the liver, "the reigning feature of which was a determination of blood to the head," especially alarming because hereditary, and when Elizabeth died, Hannah was feebly convalescent from bilious fever.

"I have carried too much sail," she says in what she apologises for as "the annals of a hospital." "My life, upon the whole, must be reckoned as an uncommonly prosperous and happy one. I have been blessed with more friends of a superior cast than have often fallen to the lot of so humble an individual. Nothing but the grace of God, and frequent attacks through life of very severe illness, could have kept me in tolerable order. If I am no better than I am with all these visitations, what should I have been without them? I have never yet felt a blow of which I did not perceive the indispensable necessity."

The stuff of which her faith was made was tried, as in a furnace heated seven times, in the spring of the next year (1817). Sally — the eldest of the three survivors — was laid upon a bed of such anguish that the surgeon who attended her often left the room in tears, and all Hannah's Christian heroism was required to hold her fast to her post of duty. For four months the ordeal continued, — intensest bodily pain and

serenest inward peace on the part of the invalid, and a sorrowful looking forward to the certain end with the devoted sisters.

“Poor Sally ! you are in dreadful pain !” said one of them, when a sharp paroxysm caused her to change countenance.

“I am, indeed, but all is well,” was the reply, to be repeated again and again, like the refrain of a blessèd song in the racked house of a pilgrimage which was nearing the end.

“I know everybody, and remember everything,” she answered when asked if she recognised a visitor to the chamber where she lay dying.

When Hannah inquired, “Have you comfort in your mind ?” the response was made smilingly :

“I have no *un*comfort at all !”

A few days before her death, the doctor bade her “Good-morning,” as he entered. She lifted her clasped hands in holy transport :

“Oh, for the glorious morning of the Resurrection ! But there are some grey clouds between.”

They parted suddenly as she awoke out of a quiet sleep on the following morning,

and looking up, as the martyr Stephen gazed heavenward in dying, she cried out in a clear, full voice :

“Blessing, and honour, and glory, and power be unto the Lamb ! Hallelujah !”

Her last words were—“Blessèd Jesus !”

Hannah and Patty drew yet more closely together after Sally’s translation, “working cheerfully together,” we are told, as befitted those who felt the time remaining for earthly labours to be all too short. As the others had passed away in the order of their ages, Hannah conceived the idea that her turn would come next. She wrought upon each day’s task in the abiding thought that the call might come at cockcrow, or at midnight on the morrow. Revision of eighteen volumes of her published works, in preparation for new editions, took up much time. *Cælebs* was in the fifteenth, *Practical Piety* in the eleventh, edition. *Cælebs* had been translated into French, several of the *Cheap Repository Tracts* into Russian. Distinguished travellers, calling at Barley Wood, told of seeing her books in Sweden, and even in Iceland ; the *Essay on Saint Paul* and several of the *Sacred Dramas* were translated by missionaries

into the Cingalese and Tamil languages. The author gave audience in her modest mansion to the titled and the great from all quarters of the globe.

“Hannah is still herself,” writes Bishop Jebb of a visit paid to Barley Wood in June, 1818. “She took me for a drive to Brockley Combe, in the course of which her anecdotes, her wit, her powers of criticism, and her admirable talent of recitation, had ample scope.”

In another part of the letter he says of Patty :

“This interesting woman is suffering with exemplary patience the most excruciating pain. Not a murmur escapes her, 'though, at night, especially, groans and cries are inevitably extorted, and the moment after the paroxysm, she is ready to resume with full interest and animation whatever may have been the subject of conversation.”

In September, 1819, the sisters had a week's visit from Mr. and Mrs. Wilberforce. Patty seemed so well that, when Hannah was taken ill on the fourth day of their guests' sojourn with her, she had no uneasiness as to her sister's ability to attend them in their walks and drives, and to entertain them when at home. At eleven

o'clock on the last night of the visit, Patty went to Hannah's bedside with the cheery announcement—"They have all gone to bed, and our Wilberforce and I have had a nice hour's chat."

There is a delicate touch of nature and of pathos in Mr. Wilberforce's mention of the subject of the "nice" talk.

"Patty sat up with me till near twelve, talking over Hannah's first introduction to a London life, and I, not she, broke off the conference. I never saw her more animated. About eight in the morning when I came out of my room I found Hannah at the door.

"'Have you not heard that Patty is dying? They called me to her in great alarm'—at which, from the ghastliness of her appearance, I could not wonder. About two or three hours after our parting for the night she had been taken ill."

In less than a week the true, loving heart, faithful unto death, was stilled for all time.

"We had worked thirty-two years together," said the bereaved woman, now in the seventy-fifth year of her age. "I may now, indeed, say, 'My house is left unto me desolate.' I have lost my chief earthly comfort, companion, counsellor, and fellow-labourer. My loss is little compared with her gain, and the remainder of my pilgrimage will be short."



CHAPTER XVI

“ THE QUEEN OF BARLEY WOOD ”—LAST BOOK
WRITTEN—CHILD VISITORS—PERSONAL AP-
PEARANCE AT EIGHTY—THE STIRRED NEST—
REMOVAL TO CLIFTON—FALLING ASLEEP

HANNAH MORE'S correspondence was always voluminous. It awakens melancholy reflections upon the uncertainty of life and the changes which come to the most stable of human friendships, when we note the abridged list of those to whom she had written regularly and freely in the prime of her womanhood.

Mrs. Montagu, Mrs. Boscawen, Mrs. Vesey, Mrs. Carter ; Johnson, Garrick, Walpole,—had passed from earth long ago. The diary-letters to the sisters were closed by Patty's death. In 1821, Mrs. Garrick died in her hundredth year. Pepys and Wilberforce were all that were left of the

matchless coterie which gave lustre to the social history of the latter part of the eighteenth century. It is grand to see the woman who had outlived the contemporaries of youth and middle age arising from the bed physicians and friends thought for many weeks of 1821-22 would be the bed of death, and buckling on her armour for active service in God's church and His world.

"There is hardly a city in America in which I have not a correspondent on matters concerning religion, morals, or literature," she told Sir W. W. Pepys.

She corresponded with the Royal Society of Literature upon such subjects as *The Age, Writings, and Genius of Homer*; wrote a masterly critique upon Madame Necker's *Life of Madame de Staël*; read and commented upon the sermons of Magee and Dean Milner, and upon the next page reviewed Scott and Byron; was actively interested in the University in the Ionian Islands, projected by Lord Guilford; and exerted her "feeble voice" to prevail upon her few parliamentary friends "to steer the middle way between the Scylla of brutal ignorance and the Charybdis of a literary

education," declaring the one to be "cruel, the other, preposterous."

In this connection I may state her conviction that "though, perhaps ten out of a hundred children (of the peasant classes) might have abilities worth cultivation, the other ninety were better with no knowledge save of their Bible and Catechism."

In 1824, when she was seventy-nine, she wrote and published her last book, *The Spirit of Prayer*. Pepys says of it :

"There is such an animated spirit of piety running through the whole of it, that not to have greatly relished it would have impeached one's taste, even more than one's principles. Mrs. Montagu and I used always to agree that you had more wit in your serious writings than other people had when they meant to be professedly witty. . . . As to this last treatise, I hope to have it always upon my table, and to read it over and over again as long as I wish to cherish the spirit of piety, which I pray to God may be as long as I live."

In June of this same year Hannah More was called upon to mourn the death of this noble gentleman.

"I believe he was the last of that select society in which for a long series of years we passed so many agreeable evenings together," writes the woman of eighty to the widow of her late friend. "I told him,

not long since, that he and I were the leavings of Pharsalia.

“Death has lately thinned the ranks of my friends. Among the more distinguished were the late Bishop of Salisbury and the Dean of Canterbury. I lately reckoned up thirty physicians who had attended me in numberless successive illnesses—all taken ! I left !——

“Though my health is better than usual, yet at my time of life, I feel on the verge of Eternity. An awful, but not a fearful, anticipation.”

Yet the “Queen of Barley Wood,” as she was styled affectionately by her friends, held almost regal court in the “little domain where every tree was planted by her own hand or under her directions.” From a description of the place in a private letter written by one of her visitors, we learn that

“a thick hedge of roses, jessamine, woodbine and clematis fringed the smooth and sloping lawn on one side ; on the other, laurel and laurestinus were in full and beautiful verdure. From the shrubbery the ground ascends, and is well wooded by flowing larch, dark cypress, spreading chestnut and some hardy forest trees. Amid this *mélange*, rustic seats and temples occasionally peep forth, and two monuments are especially conspicuous—the one to the memory of Porteous, the other to the memory of Locke.”

Miss Frowd, the amiable and sympathetic companion of the otherwise solitary mistress

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of the home, computed that the number of calls averaged eighty per week. Mrs. More "knew not how to help it." She saw the older guests out of respect ; the young, in the hope of doing them good ; those from a distance, because they had come so far to see her ; her neighbours, to hinder them from feeling jealous of the attention she paid to strangers. From twelve o'clock until three each day a constant stream of carriages and pedestrians filled the evergreen - bordered avenue leading from the Wrigton village road. Rowland Hill, whom Mrs. More calls "an extraordinary being," spent a morning with her, proving to be "extremely well-bred, in spite of his irregular clerical performances," and "talking of everybody from John Bunyan to John Locke." Mrs. More chronicles admiringly that he had vaccinated "very near eight thousand poor people with his own hand." Ecclesiastics by the score, statesmen by the dozen, and numberless people of rank from England, Canada, and the Continent paid their respects to the wonderful old lady.

"You would be surprised to see the number of superior Americans who visit me," she writes. "They

are a very improving people. They are running the race of glory with us. I hope they will make us quicken our pace.

“I had lately a visit from the principal bookseller of New York, who told me he had sold thirty thousand copies of *Cælebs*, and he added that it did more good there than my decidedly religious writings, because it was read universally by worldly people who might shrink from some of the others.”

The large number of children who were brought to see her was a source of especial gratification.

“They say your sex is naturally capricious,” she said playfully to a boy of six as he took his leave. “There! I will give you another kiss. Keep it for my sake, and when you are a man remember Hannah More.”

“I will,” he said, “remember that you loved children.”

The Rev. T. B. Knight—formerly of Wrington, now of Bristol and President of the “Hannah More Society,” an organisation having as its object the intelligent preservation of everything pertaining to the life and labours of this great and good woman—has in his possession an autograph letter from Mr. Gladstone written to Mr. Knight relative to a visit he paid to Barley Wood as a child.

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By the courtesy of Mr. Knight I herewith give a verbatim copy of the note :

“DEAR SIR :

In the spring of 1815 I think it was, — certainly not later, that my mother took me to see Mrs. Hannah More at Barley Wood, when she presented me personally with a small copy of her *Sacred Dramas*, which I still possess.

Your very faithful

W. E. GLADSTONE.

Jul. 20, '90.”

In 1826, when she was eighty-one, Hannah More wrote a long and earnest letter to “an awakened Infidel,” urging upon him the importance of “Repentance towards God, and faith in the Lord Jesus Christ.” Rowland Hill himself could not have made a more direct and powerful appeal. Although for eight years she had been confined, except in very fine summer weather, to a suite of two rooms on the first floor of her house, she took lively interest in the adornment of the grounds visible from her windows, superintending the setting out of plantations of young trees and the opening of new walks. Her knitting-work was a great solace when she was too weary to write letters. She knit

stockings for her friends, socks, garters, and muffatees, for "the Jews' basket," and charity bazaars.

"These, by the lady customers' giving five times more than they are worth, bring, in the year, no contemptible sum," is a passage in a letter to a titled friend.

The private letter from which quotation was made awhile ago treats us to a sketch of the Hannah More of this date which brings her vividly before our eyes :

"There was something of courtliness about her manner,—the courtliness of the *vielle cour*, which one reads of and seldom meets. Her dress was of light green Venetian silk ; a yellow, richly-embroidered crape shawl covered her shoulders, and a pretty net cap tied under her chin with white satin ribbon, completed her costume. Her figure is engagingly petite ; but to have any idea of the expression of her countenance you must imagine the small, withered face of a woman in her seventy-seventh year" (eighty-odd ?) "and imagine also — shaded, but not obscured, by long, perfectly white eyelashes — eyes, dark, brilliant, flashing and penetrating, sparkling from object to object with all the fire and energy of youth, and sending welcome all around. . . . The spirit within was as warm and cheerful as if the blood of eighteen, instead of eighty, coursed in her veins."

The placid beauty of the long evening of her well-spent life was disturbed, the nest

in which she had hoped to die was broken up by a cause so ignoble one has hardly patience to tell the pitiful story.

Her sisters had been her housekeepers, and when the death of the youngest, the willing, efficient Patty, threw the care of the establishment, including the management of servants, upon Hannah, she was too old and infirm to learn new lessons. With generous confidence in the fidelity of domestics taken from the parish for whose poor she had toiled so long and at such cost to herself, she committed everything to them,—marketing, cookery, and running expenses, with the care of house and grounds.

“To bestow confidence where experience should awaken suspicion and inspire caution, is to sleep on duty,” says her biographer, candidly. He might have added, “and to invite dishonesty.”

When the house-bills were inordinately large, cook and parlour-maid had only to plead the needs of the parish poor, to whom the kitchen doors were ever open, to lull the mistress’s misgivings, and even win her approbation. “The poor ye have always with you,” was a text that implied

the Christian duty of giving without ceasing.

The waste and thievery at Barley Wood were matters of serious concern to her friends and a parish scandal for months before the victim of ingratitude and peculation would listen to a syllable of accusation against those she "knew she could trust." For three years the expenditures of the household exceeded her abundant income by three hundred pounds annually, and in 1828 she awoke with a thrill of shame and horror to the truth that other and grosser evils than waste and indolence had resulted from her imprudent confidence. "Dishonest and vicious servants were making her appear to tolerate sins she had testified against through life."

The old energy of spirit and will asserted itself. She made quick work of a change that was like tearing up affections and memories by the roots. The vile creatures of her bounty were dismissed summarily, and she left her home for a house on Windsor Terrace, in Clifton, now a part of Bristol.

Several gentlemen from the neighbourhood, apprehensive of riotous demonstrations from the disgraced servants and their

friends, who had shared in the benefits of their thieving, awaited without to escort the carriage which came to take her away one cold morning early in the year. When dressed for the journey, Mrs. More walked slowly, leaning upon her companion's arm, through the rooms filled with mementos of days that were no more, pausing before each portrait to look a loving farewell. As she was assisted into the coach by the reverent bodyguard, she cast one lingering glance upon house and gardens :

“I am driven, like Eve, out of Paradise, but not, like Eve, by angels.”

If there were bitterness in the ejaculation, it was short-lived. By the time she was settled in her new quarters she could say, calmly, if sadly, to those who inveighed against the ingrates :

“It is their sinfulness towards God that formed the melancholy part of the case.”

Then she dismissed “the case” and made the brightest best of what was left to her. *A Sketch of my Court at Windsor Terrace, 1828*, begins with the Duke of Gloucester as one of “my sportsmen.” The Bishop of Salisbury is put down as her “oculist” ; Mr. Wilberforce, her “guide,

philosopher, and friend" ; Mr. Cadell, "*accoucheur* to the Muses, who has introduced many a sad, sickly brat to see the light, but whispers that they must not depend upon a long life."

It is gratifying to read, in connection with the exaggerated report of her pecuniary losses which got abroad, that her American readers and admirers proposed to make up "a fund sufficient to preserve her from all fear of future pecuniary difficulties."

The offer was gratefully declined with others from friends nearer home. Barley Wood was sold to Mr. William Hartford, an esteemed acquaintance, and she parted with the copyrights of ten of her books, realising a handsome sum by the transfer.

She says, cheerfully, that "I have exchanged eight pampered minions for four sober servants, and greatly lessened my house expenses, enabling me to maintain my schools and enlarge my charities."

"Miss Frowd is my great earthly treasure. She has the entire management of my family, and is very judicious in the common offices of life. She reads well and she reads much to me."



HANNAH MORE'S GRAVE IN WRINGTON CHURCHYARD

Miss Frowd was kneeling at her pillow on Friday, September 6, 1833, when the dark eyes opened full upon her face, and the voice, still soft, although weak and thin with age and illness, said :

“I love you, my dear child, with fervency. It will be pleasant to you, twenty years hence, to remember that I said this on my death-bed.”

She had been ill for ten months, failing in body and in mind—never in heart and temper—for nearly five years. Morning prayers had been said at her bedside as usual, that day, she seeming to listen with “hands devoutly lifted up.” The evening had come, and Miss Frowd was still watching the dear visage upon which a strange radiance had settled,—an “unusual brightness.” At nine o’clock the brightness became glory, a smile that made her face as the face of an angel. She lifted her arms to embrace some one invisible to her watchers.

“Patty !” she cried, then, as distinctly, “Joy !”

And when she had said this, she fell asleep.



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